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JOHN WESLEY'S DOCTRINE OF GOD AND ITS IMPACT
ON HIS THEOLOGY AND MINISTRY

BY

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Statement of the Problem

This study proposes to form the idea about the influence of John Wesley's concept of God as Father on his theological and pastoral distinctive by surveying mainly the primary sources, to ascertain the theological distinctive in the Wesleyanism. The hypothesis of this study is that Wesley's understanding of the concept of God had a major impact on his ministry.

The purpose of this study will be (1) to analyze the works of John Wesley in terms of the doctrine of God to show the concept of God as Father is one of his theological distinctives; (2) to analyze the works and ministerial activities of John Wesley in terms of the pastoral theology to discover the characteristics of Wesley's pastoral theology; and (3) to determine what is the relationship between these two characteristics.

Limitation of Study

This study will be limited to Wesley's doctrine of God and its theological implications for his ministry. Wesley's sermons will be adopted as the main source. In order to ascertain the difference between the Calvinistic view and the Wesleyan view, the Calvinistic view also has to be examined in detail in the ministries of certain Calvinists of Wesley's day such as George Whitefield. Accordingly, this study will include materials on the historical background, the circumstances of Wesley and Calvinists, and Wesley's other writings.

Method of Study

Since the topic of this thesis has not been examined much before, there are few secondary sources about the doctrine of God of John Wesley. Therefore, the primary sources will be the main materials. The examination will be made as follows. The data concerning the doctrine of God will be collected directly from Wesley's one hundred sermons. An understanding of the roles of God will be abridged from that data. Certain theological positions of John Wesley will be examined by surveying his essays. The correlation of the understanding of the roles of God with his theological positions will be examined from this information.

Review of Related Literature

The literatures will be reviewed in three dimensions: the doctrine of God of John Wesley, the doctrine of salvation, and Wesley's ministry and the historical background. The main sources will be enumerated in the following.

There are few secondary sources about the doctrine of God of John Wesley, especially the analyses from the perspective of the roles of God. The manuscript The Holiness of God will be the most important material in order to give the dimension to categorize the roles of God in Wesley's sermons.¹ The roles of God are discussed in eight categories from the biblical and theological perspectives. John Wesley in Theological Debate is going to be one of the main sources which will support the idea

¹ Allan Coppedge, The Holiness of God, TS, 1988.

of the first half of the thesis.² This book is written primarily to discuss the difference between the Calvinism and the Wesleyanism. Yet the interesting thing in this argument is that especially the doctrine of God is argued in terms of the Role of God as Father, which might be one of the distinctives of Wesley's theology. The difference of the views between Wesley and Whitefield is also examined. Theology of John Wesley, which is the one of the well known works on Wesley's theology, discusses the doctrine of God, though author's point of view is not always the same as will be discussed in the thesis.³ The doctrine of God is argued in the light of creation and providence. It is interesting that the character of God is focused on His holiness.

Wesley's Christology: an Interpretation is one of the interesting sources to consider Wesley's doctrine of God.⁴ After mentioning three aspect of Christology, the person of Christ, the states of Christ, and the work of Christ, the author develops his argument about the work of Christ, going into three directions: the prophetic work, the kingly work, the priestly work. This might become one of the good sources to think of the Role of God as Father, though it is not clear how Christology is related to it.

The many materials about Wesley's soteriology are published since the doctrine

² Allan Coppedge, John Wesley in Theological Debate (Wilmore: Wesley Heritage Press, 1987).

³ William Ragsdale Cannon, Theology of John Wesley (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press).

⁴ John Deschner, Wesley's Christology: an Interpretation (Grand Rapids: Francis Asbury Press, 1988).

of salvation is one of the crucial theme in Wesley's theological framework. Wesley and Sanctification tries to analyze Wesley's theology from the perspective of sanctification.⁵ The parts focused on in my study are the prevenient grace and the doctrine of love. This is not direct explanation of God as loving Father. Yet it will be important to analyze his concept of love.

John Wesley's Theology Today is one of the most general and balanced explanations of Wesley's theology.⁶ Wesley's theological attitudes, the meaning of the means of grace including the instituted ones and the prudential ones, and the doctrine of church are available. John Wesley's Message for Today deals with the problem of Christian growth in Wesleyan way.⁷ Chapter V deals with the transformation after saving grace, and the chapter VI does the growth in grace including the means of grace. It will be useful to know the meaning of Wesley's pastoral theology. John Wesley's Message Today is the brief explanation of his concept of the means of grace, class meeting, etc..⁸ The chapter, "Growth through Christian community," will be one of the helpful sources.

In order to get the information about Wesley's life and his ministry, many

⁵ Harald Lindström, Wesley and Sanctification: A Study in the Doctrine of Salvation (Grand Rapids: Francis Asbury Press, 1980).

⁶ Colin W. Williams, John Wesley's Theology Today (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989).

⁷ Steve Harper, John Wesley's Message for Today (Grand Rapids: Francis Asbury Press, 1983).

⁸ Lovett H. Weems, Jr., John Wesley's Message Today (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991).

materials can be examined. The main source is Reasonable Enthusiast: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism, which offers fairly good information about historical background.⁹ Wesley's Theology is also the survey of Wesley's life and theological implications.¹⁰

The most remarkable article in a journal is "A Wesleyan Theology of Ministry," by Harold Burgess.¹¹ It argues the correlation of the role of God as Father with the atmosphere in his ministry.

⁹ Henry D. Rack, Reasonable Enthusiast: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1989).

¹⁰ Mitsuru Fujimoto, Wesley's Theology (Tokyo: Evangelical Publishing Association, 1990).

¹¹ Harold Burgess, "A Wesleyan Theology of Ministry," Wesleyan Theological Journal 18 (Spring 1983).

CHAPTER 2

Analysis of Roles of God in Wesley's Sermons

Prevalent Analysis of Roles of God

Before analyzing Wesley's concept of God through the collection of the data from his sermons, it is meaningful to look first at John Wesley's direct statements about the concept of God. There are few direct statements to synthesize his concept of God, and also few secondary sources which deal with a clear presentation of his concept of God. Within these limited resources, one of the essays most obvious for showing his concept of God is "Thoughts upon God's Sovereignty." Here Wesley summarizes his thoughts on God, and what kind of function God has. He says,

God reveals himself under a two-fold character; as a Creator, and as Governor. These are no way inconsistent with each other; but they are totally different. [...] Let then these two ideas of God the Creator, the sovereign Creator, and God the Governor, the just Governor, be always kept apart. Let us distinguish them from each other, with the utmost care. So shall we give God the full glory of his sovereign grace, without impeaching his inviolable justice.¹²

This is a direct summary of John Wesley's understanding of the roles of God. A more distinct abstract can not be found easily in his works. His understanding of the roles of God is manifested clearly here in two ways. To Wesley God was both a Creator and a Governor.

Wesley's understanding can be deduced by considering the flow of the understanding of God's roles in history. In the Reformation era, the concept of roles

¹² John Wesley, The Works of John Wesley: third edition, vol. 10 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), 361, 363. This edition will be abbreviated to Works in the following footnotes.

of God tended to be limited to a Creator and a King. The Reformers observed that the Scripture described God both as Creator and King, and the era made it easier to see God's relation to man within this concept.¹³ Since the Reformation era influenced the Calvinistic point of view so much, the kind of perspective which might be taken on the roles of God is a fairly interesting theological theme. In contrast to the Reformers' view that God works on man transcendentally and sovereignly, the Wesleyan perspective states that God has a rather immanent relationship with man. This is one of the important points of Wesleyan theology.

Though Wesley recognized that God worked on man not only with sovereignty but also with righteousness, he never threw away the importance of God's transcendence and sovereignty, which are the attributes of God as a Creator and a King. He still has a strong emphasis on these. He mentions a Creator in the same essay.

As a Creator, he has acted, in all things, according to his own sovereign will. Justice has not, cannot have, any place here; for nothing is due to what has no being. Here, therefore, he may, in the most absolute sense, do what he will with his own. Accordingly, he created the heavens and the earth, and all things that are therein, in every conceivable respect, "according to his own good pleasure." 1. He began his creation at what time, or rather, at what part of eternity, it seemed him good. Had it pleased him, it might have been millions of years sooner, or millions of ages later. 2. He determined, by his sovereign will, the duration of the universe; whether it should last seven thousand, or seven hundred thousand, or numberless millions of years. [...] 4. Of his sovereign will he determined the number of the stars, of all the component parts of the universe, and the magnitude of every atom, of every fixed star, every planet, and every comet. 5. As Sovereign, he created the earth, with all the furniture of it, whether animate or inanimate; and gave to each such a nature, with such properties. 6. Of his own good pleasure, he made such a creature as man, an embodied spirit, and, in consequence of his spiritual

¹³ John Wesley in Theological Debate, 128.

nature, endued with understanding, will, and liberty.¹⁴

Wesley's God is never a weak and compromising One who cannot help to easily concede His will to man. He can determine everything himself according to his sovereign will, so he is able to do anything of his own good pleasure.

Another thing that should be noted here in relation to this is that these two aspects of God are never inconsistent with each other, but they are totally different. Wesley's view was that God is the Creator, and that He is the Governor at the same time, without being inconsistent with each other. He says,

This cannot be, because it would suppose the character of God as a Creator, to interfere with God as a Governor; wherein he does not, cannot possible, act according to his own mere sovereign will; but, as he has expressly told us, according to the invariable rules both of justice and mercy.¹⁵

Therefore, it is not correct to choose either a role of God as a Creator or as a Governor. In other words, it is not right to say, when God is a transcendent Creator, He cannot be a righteous Governor. While being a transcendent Creator and a sovereign King, He can exercise his will not only according to his sovereignty, but also according to the invariable rules of both justice and mercy. "Whenever, therefore, God acts as a Governor, as a rewarder, or punisher, he no longer acts as a mere Sovereign, by his own sole will and pleasure; but as an impartial Judge, guided in all things by invariable justice."¹⁶

Though Wesley's God was a transcendent Creator and a sovereign King, he

¹⁴ Works, vol. 10, 361-362.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 362.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 362.

thought God could not be a tyrant, an arbitrary king who does whatever He wants by neglecting certain rules, but instead Wesley considered other aspects of God in the Scriptures. He recognized that God was also a righteous Judge by thinking of the meaning of justice and mercy. He says,

"The Judge of all the earth will do right. He will judge the world in righteousness," and every man therein, according to the strictest justice. He will punish no man for doing anything which he could not possibly avoid; neither for omitting anything which he could not possibly do. Every punishment supposes the offender might have avoided the offence for which he is punished: Otherwise, to punish him would be palpably unjust, and inconsistent with the character of God our Governor.¹⁷

If man has a moral existence, God cannot only be a Creator and a King. He must also be a righteous Judge, so that man is morally responsible to God. This was Wesley's concept of roles of God.

The concept that God reveals himself under a two-fold character; as a Creator, and as a Governor, is followed by some theologians who try to analyze Wesley's doctrine of God. The analysis of William Ragsdale Cannon is in line with this exactly, saying, "Wesley tells us that God reveals himself under a two-fold character."¹⁸ While he picks up these two aspects of roles of God, Creator and Governor, he also explains that there is no contradiction between them, and that each is in harmony with the other.¹⁹ Although the Creator and Governor roles have been emphasized, few theologians have explored other roles of God. The theme of this study will to

¹⁷ Ibid., 363.

¹⁸ Cannon, 162.

¹⁹ Ibid., 171.

examine the other kind of roles of God Wesley actually had. By analyzing Wesley's sermons directly, a look at his concept of roles of God will be made in the following sections.

Divisions of Wesley's Life

In order to identify Wesley's concept of God, the 150 sermons which played a great role as a theological standard in his ministry should be investigated. Accordingly, all the statements in his sermons which are related to the concept of God either directly or indirectly have been consulted. After collecting them, they were divided into three categories which correspond to the three period of his life. How to divide his life is an important issue, because it depends on one's theological point of view; for example, how much he/she values the Aldersgate experience.

The first sermon had been written on October 1, 1725, which was right after his ordination as deacon on September 19. One of the crucial revolutions in his religious thinking occurred that same year, and is called the Oxford conversion. This experience was significant in his life since he began to keep a diary in April 1725.²⁰ In terms of his spiritual experience, there are some interpretations of the meaning of that year. The Oxford conversion is sometimes discussed in relation to the Aldersgate experience which is generally identified as an "evangelical conversion". The Aldersgate experience was significant and had considerable meaning in his spiritual journey; however, it is not appropriate to regard Aldersgate as the only climactic spiritual experience. There is a tendency in Wesleyanism that Wesley's

²⁰ Rack, 70.

conversion experience can be explained only by the Aldersgate experience. The Oxford conversion was an insufficient condition in the sense that he had no assurance of his spirituality, though he was awakened spiritually to definitely commit himself to God.

However, that year should not be underestimated because then he began to think of holy life before God as the most important matter in his life, which lasted until his death.²¹ He says in "Plain Account of Christian Perfection,"

In the year 1725, being in the twenty-third year of my age, I met with Bishop Taylor's "Rule and Exercises of Holy Living and Dying." In reading several parts of this book, I was exceedingly affected; that part in particular which relates to purity of intention. Instantly I resolved to dedicate all my life to God, all my thoughts, and words, and actions; being thoroughly convinced, there was no medium; but that every part of my life (not some only) must either be a sacrifice to God, or myself, that is, in effect, to the devil.²²

The Aldersgate experience in 1738 was no doubt pivotal in his life from the perspective of the function of faith. The experience in 1725 has to do with "life," while the one in 1738 is related to "faith," both of which were inevitable in his spiritual life.²³ Therefore, both of them should be the important points to divide his life. The period between them is the first period of his life.

It is not so easy to determine the period of another division as the first one. Though entire sanctification can be another element to decide the period, it is not always easy to identify this experience in his life. However, the year of 1760 can be

²¹ Fujimoto, 17.

²² Works, vol. 11, 366.

²³ Fujimoto, 17.

thought of as the crucial point in the sense that the holiness revival broke out, and Wesley himself, who had ministered actually and saw what had been going on, had a hard time theologizing this issue. Wesley was skeptical of the holiness revival phenomenon, and tried to identify it over and over again. Finally he had become convinced that it was biblical. Apparently this phenomenon gave him the chance to theologize the doctrine of Christian perfection.²⁴ How the perfectionist movement spread quickly in the 1760s, and the date of its commencement are not clear.²⁵ However, Wesley produced his Thought on Christian Perfection in 1759, and the review of his doctrine, Plain Account of Christian Perfection in 1767, trying to show the legitimacy of the doctrine. Though it is difficult to identify the exact year, the year 1760 can be the division in that the focal point shifted from salvation by faith to Christian perfection. This makes a difference theologically. Accordingly, the third period can be from 1760 to 1791, the year of his death.

Analysis of Data

Introductory Survey

Since this study is an attempt to find Wesley's concept of God, almost all the statements in his sermons concerning a concept of God are sorted into eight categories: creator/physician, king, revealer, priest, judge/governor, father, redeemer, shepherd, and other expressions. It should be noted here that the

²⁴ Rack, 334.

²⁵ Ibid., 335.

categories in this study were basically adopted according to those of Dr. Allan Coppedge.²⁶ The total number of items which were collected out of Wesley's sermons is over three thousand. The result are as follows.

Table 1

Roles of God in Wesley's Sermons

Roles of God	I (19)	II (45)	III (86)	TOTAL(150)
Creator/Physician	53 (21.6)	79 (6.0)	234 (14.8)	366 (11.7)
King: wisdom	37 (15.1)	179 (13.6)	253 (16.1)	469 (15.0)
Revealer	48 (19.6)	312 (23.7)	411 (26.1)	771 (24.6)
Priest: mercy	25 (10.2)	108 (8.2)	93 (5.9)	226 (7.2)
Judge/Governor: righteous	28 (11.4)	216 (16.4)	168 (10.7)	412 (13.1)
Father: love	26 (10.6)	319 (24.2)	261 (16.6)	606 (19.3)
Redeemer	15 (6.1)	71 (5.4)	103 (6.5)	189 (6.0)
Shepherd: goodness	4 (1.6)	18 (1.4)	16 (1.0)	38 (1.2)
Others expressions	9 (3.7)	14 (1.1)	37 (2.3)	60 (1.9)
TOTAL	245	1,316	1,576	3,137

When categorizing the statements concerning the concept of God in his sermons, there are the manifest ones which show the roles of God as nouns; however, there are many ambiguous expressions which cannot easily fall into the categories. Sometimes, it is not always easy to decide which category an expression falls into. Some expressions can be thought to fall into plural categories. The concept "power"

²⁶ The Holiness of God.

has to do with God as creator, king, and redeemer. These expressions were placed into one category as much as possible, by taking its context into consideration to find the meanings of these expressions. In this study, some other minor roles are placed into similar ones. For example, physician falls into the category of creator, in relation to the image of God or renewal of the image of God. Governor is also categorized with righteous judge. In particular, the terms indicating God's attributes have to be included in order to get more exact data to present Wesley's concept of God. For instance, a loving God is profoundly related to the role of God as father. The attribute of righteousness is connected with the concept of judge. Wisdom can be counted as the attribute of God as king. Moreover, the terms related to salvation such as regeneration, pardon, reconciliation, forgiveness, justification, adoption, new birth, redemption, etc., are also to be counted as showing the roles of God. Other important expressions related to the roles of God in this study are outpouring of the Spirit, presence of God, purity, child of God, deliverance, etc..

The first row shows the divisions of his life defined in the chapter II, section A. The division "I" means the sermons in 1725-1737, "II" in 1738-1760, and "III" in 1762-1792. The total number of the sermons is one hundred and fifty. The text is the Works of John Wesley edited by Albert Outler.²⁷ Though this edition of the works contains one hundred and fifty one sermons of John Wesley, one Latin text sermon number 151 was excluded. The digits in the parenthesis are the number of the

²⁷ Albert C. Outler, ed., The Works of John Wesley, vols. 1-4 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984-1987). This bicentennial edition will be abbreviated to BE Works in the following footnotes.

sermons in each period. For example, there are nineteen sermons in the first period. The figure in each column is the number of the quotations taken by making cards which are related to the concept of God. The figure in each set of parentheses indicates the percentage in each division.

Sermons in 1725-1737

This first period, 1725-1737, which was separated according to the division in section B, is between two big incidents in Wesley's life: the Oxford conversion and the Aldersgate experience. There are nineteen sermons in this period.²⁸ Some of Wesley's early and famous sermons such as "The Circumcision of the Heart" are included here. The first sermon, "Death and Deliverance," was written on October 1, 1725. Since he was ordained as a deacon on September 19, 1725, it is recognized that he started writing immediately after his ordination. While ministering, he continued to write one or two sermons a year during this period.

The number of items which are related to the roles of God amounts to 245. As the table 1 indicates, the one which occurs most is Creator. It accounts for 21.6 percent out of the 245 items. The second one is Revealer at 19.6 percent. The third one is King, which occurs 15.1 percent. On the other hand, Father is seen only in 10.6 percent of the items, and Judge is just 11.4 percent. Furthermore, when the number of roles of God as Creator and King, which symbolize the aspect of the separation of God including the transcendence and sovereignty of God, are placed together, it

²⁸ Albert C. Outler, "The Sermons in Chronological Sequence," in The Works of John Wesley, ed. Albert C. Outler, vol. 4 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1987), 548, ff..

amounts to 90 occurrences, which is 36.7 percent of all items. Compared with the data of all the sermons, the percent of Creator in this period is much higher than that, whereas that of Father in this period is much lower than that, which indicates the remarkable feature of this period. In short, it seems that the personal relationship of God with man, such as the roles of God as Revealer or Father, is one of the features in Wesley's concept of God, and it can be substantiated by considering the results of all the data. However, this period shows the feature differently, namely, God's attribute of separation is dominant. The impression while reading the sermons in this period is different from those of other periods. It seems at least that the Aldersgate experience made a difference in Wesley's mind in terms of the concept of God.

Each role of God will be analyzed briefly in the following.

Creator. The role of God as Creator is the dominant one in the first period, and the percent is 21.6. Accordingly, it turns out that more than one the fifth of all items are related to the Creator role.

First, the concept which Wesley had in terms of Creator was "Creator and creature" relationships. The contrast is seen in the phrase "Tis therefore absolutely necessary to give yourselves up to one or the other; to cleave wholly either to the Creator or the creature; for ye cannot serve God and mammon."²⁹ Interestingly, several statements with regard to this could be found, most of which are related to man's love of Creator and creature. He especially focused on love here, while discussing this concept. The most important thing is the love of the Creator, and not

²⁹ BE Works, vol. 4, 217.

that of creatures. This is seen in the sermon where it says "The Love of God" or "we may not love the creature above the Creator."³⁰ To love only the Creator, not the creatures, was Wesley's religion. Therefore, if there is any doubt about this love, it causes problems. In the same sermon he says, "the very disease of our nature is loving the creature above the Creator."³¹ Though it seems that his understanding of love in this period was different from that after Aldersgate, there is no doubt that he was focusing on love even in this period.

Another thing which should be recognized with the role of Creator is that he had already had the concept of sanctification, though it was fairly vague. To him the Creator must also be holy. He used these two terms in the same place sometimes.³²

Thirdly, when thinking of the role of God as Creator, the concept that "man was originally made in the image of God" cannot be omitted.³³ Moreover, the important thing for Wesley was redemption which meant the recovery of this image of God. This was one of the main themes in Wesley's concept. Sin was to "efface the image of God," while redemption was "a recovery of the image of God" in us.³⁴ This concept of the recovery in man of the image of God should be spelled out to some stage of the order of salvation. This recovery of the image of God is related to the idea of a born again

³⁰ Ibid., 333.

³¹ Ibid., 338.

³² Ibid., 271.

³³ Ibid., 293.

³⁴ Ibid., 354, 373.

experience, Christian perfection, and holiness.³⁵ For example, Wesley says, "by consequence the being endued with those virtues which were also in Christ Jesus, the being so 'renewed in the image of our mind' as to be 'perfect, as our Father in heaven is perfect'."³⁶ For Wesley, salvation experience, namely, redemption was the renewal of God's image and also the reprinting of God's image in man. It can be said that the recovery of the image of God in man was the most remarkable theme in Wesley's theology. Though this concept before the Aldersgate experience does not necessarily fit what he thought afterwards, it is interesting that even in this period he had already thought of the scheme of salvation in this way, while discussing the role of God as Creator which indicates the aspect of separation or transcendence. Considering that the idea of Creator is not limited in God's work of the Creation, it also can be said that Wesley's concept of God tends to be in a sense more like immanence, while keeping his strong tendency toward the phase of Creator.

Revealer. The role of God as Revealer was the second one in the sermons in the first period of his life, which accounts for 19.6 percent of all items. The expressions which fall into this category extend to the various meanings such as "the hand of God," "the consolation of God," "our Lord hath clearly told us," "God does work wonderfully in him," "to be reconciled to God," etc.. The topic, however, can be summarized mainly into two: the Scriptures, and the Holy Spirit.

The first thing is God's revelation through His voice and the Scriptures, which

³⁵ Ibid., 355. BE Works, vol. 1, 403, 404.

³⁶ Ibid., 403.

are believed to be God's Words. With regard to this some related expressions are used. For instance, "this voice of God is in majesty."³⁷ This image is also associated with that of a King. To Wesley, God was the God who speaks in such a way that man can understand what He wants man to know. It can be said that He tells us especially about love. "As to the measure of this love, our Lord hath clearly told us, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart."³⁸ Only few statements can be found about Scripture, but he says in the sermon titled "The Circumcision of the Heart," "... that faith which is not only an unshaken assent to all that God hath revealed in Scripture, and in particular to those important truths, Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners; ..." ³⁹ It is no doubt that to Wesley Scripture was the revelation of God's words.

Secondly, it should be noted that Wesley focused on the Holy Spirit as Revealer. In the whole data, the aspect of the works of the Holy Spirit might be one of the remarkable features in Wesley's concept of God. Though the percent of a Revealer in this period is lower than the whole data, there had been already the concept of the Holy Spirit and His works in Wesley's mind. A few thing can be pointed out with regard to this. Though some of them are the direct quotations from Scripture, he used the strong expression of "dwell" by showing the infilling of the Holy Spirit. For example, "His Holy Spirit shall dwell in you, and shine more and more

³⁷ BE Works, vol. 4, 321.

³⁸ Ibid., 383.

³⁹ BE Works, vol. 1, 405.

upon your souls unto the perfect day."⁴⁰ "... [A]nd that holiness becometh that house for ever where the Spirit of holiness vouchsafes to dwell."⁴¹ The expression "dwell" indicates the strong tie of God with man, in other words, the strong relationship of God with man. It also shows that the relationship is not temporary, but it is expected to have the length of time.

It can be said that the indwelling of the Holy Spirit as Revealer is the important point in his theological framework. He tries to explain the works of the Holy Spirit by mentioning some aspects. The first thing is that the Holy Spirit is the power with which a man who is totally deprived can do good things. He says in the sermon "The Circumcision of the Heart," "unless he continually feels in his inmost soul that without the Spirit of God resting upon him he can neither think, nor desire, nor speak, nor act, anything good or well-pleasing in his sight."⁴² On the other hand, he mentions love with regard to this which is more important. He says, "if we are not renewed in the spirit of our mind by the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto us."⁴³ This expression shows up so often in the following periods. It might be counted as one of the most remarkable expressions. It is interesting that this expression showed up here already, though there are fewer occurrences in the first period compared with the following ones. Another

⁴⁰ BE Works, vol. 4, 377.

⁴¹ BE Works, vol. 1, 407.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 409.

⁴³ BE Works, vol. 4, 385.

interesting expression which can be seen is "Spirit bears witness." This is not an outstanding one in this period. However, this expression also shows up often later on.

King. The third one is the role of God as King, which accounts for 15.1 percent in this period. A few phrases should be noted in this category. When Wesley mentions the role of God as King, some concepts are included here. The first one is "glory of God." He says, "Behold, the Lord our God hath showed us his glory and his greatness, and we have heard his voice out of the midst of the fire."⁴⁴ Yet, this glory is not always objective. Glory is what we should demonstrate when we do something. This is evident in the following, "when whether we eat, or drink, or whatever we do, we do all to the glory of God."⁴⁵ The relationship of God with man, which is one of the characteristics of Wesley's concept of God, can be seen here as well.

Another expression which should be noted is the "kingdom of God." As Matthew 6:33 is quoted some times, the kingdom of God is presented as what should be sought.⁴⁶

Though these expressions fall into the category of King, they are not always related to the image of a powerful king who reigns over his region and his people by his tyrannical will. Even though he mentions the role of God as King, some of them

⁴⁴ Ibid., 328.

⁴⁵ BE Works, vol. 1, 414.

⁴⁶ BE Works, vol. 4, 219.

are interestingly discussed in relation to man. How a man acts in relation to God seems to be a theme in Wesley's mind.

Judge. The role of God as righteous Judge is a distinct feature in Wesley's concept, which appears to be different from the Calvinistic view. The concept that God is the righteous Judge was in Wesley's mind.⁴⁷ He made an interesting statement about the righteous Judge, which shows the characteristics of his theological position, by saying, "... why it was just and right, as well as merciful in God, to deal to every man his distinct measure of faith."⁴⁸ It seems to be an excellent description of his understanding of the righteousness which should be evident in the righteous Judge. However, the special emphasis on the righteous Judge can be hardly recognized in this period, though there are several statements related to Judge or righteousness.

Another expression relating to this is "command of God," or "law of God." In particular, "command of God," is the expression which shows up frequently in all the sermons. This expression is discussed in many cases in relation to the means of grace.

Father. Compared with other periods and his entire life, the aspect of Father, which can be one of the features of his concept of God, is not emphasized in this period. Definitely this aspect is a characteristic, which cannot be seen in any other theological framework than Wesley's. The role of God as Father plays a crucial role

⁴⁷ Ibid., 212.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 289.

in Wesley's mind. Though we must avoid oversimplification, God as Father accounts for approximately twenty percent in the data of all the sermons.

In some cases, the term "Father" is used by itself, while in other cases, "Father" occurs with other modifiers such as "in heaven." A few statements have been included in order to discuss the Trinity.⁴⁹ The expression which should be noted especially is "child of God" or "children of God." Sometimes this expression is accompanied by the witness of the Spirit.⁵⁰ Accordingly, the aspect of God as Father is in a sense related to God as Revealer. Often the concept, "child of God," is discussed along with the idea of witness of the Spirit. Namely, the Spirit witnesses to their heart that they are the children of God.

Another thing which should be noted about the role of God as Father is the expression, "love," which shows up often, becoming one of the main themes in his theology and in the following periods. The following phrase quoted from the sermon, "The Image of God" is points to this.

His affections were rational, even, and regular - if we may be allowed to say 'affections', for properly speaking he had but one: man was what God is, Love. Love filled the whole expansion of his soul; it possessed him without a rival. Every movement of his heart was love: it knew no other fervour.⁵¹

That God is love is an undeniable fact to Wesley. His religious pursuit is to know how to love God, which is repeated many times in the second and the third period. Through this statement about God's love, he referred vaguely to the Christian

⁴⁹ Ibid., 359.

⁵⁰ BE Works, vol. 1, 406.

⁵¹ BE Works, vol. 4, 294.

experience which can be interpreted as entire sanctification. This also becomes the major theme in his theology. It seems that when the aspect of the role of God as Father is mentioned, "love" is connoted often.

Priest. The next one is the role of God as Priest, which accounts for approximately 10 percent of all items in this period. The figure 10 percent in this period is much higher than that in all the sermons. Generally speaking, it seems that the concept of Priest was not so significant in his mind as the other aspects such as Revealer or Father. However, there is no doubt that it has a deep relationship with his doctrine, especially his concept of the order of salvation.

The idea of Priest has to do with purification or sanctification in Wesley's scheme. When describing who God is, he used the term, "Sanctifier."⁵² With this expression, phrases such as "cleanse from sin," "wash us from our sins," or "purified as his Lord is pure," are used as well. When Wesley mentions the role of God as Priest, it means Sanctifier or Purifier.

Jesus as Mediator plays a big role in Wesley's concept with regard to the role of God as Priest. Several statements relating to Jesus' role can be recognized.⁵³

Redeemer, Shepherd and others. In this period, only a few remarkable features can be recognized in the category of Redeemer. His concept can be summarized mainly in two: deliverance from sin or yoke, and the power of Jesus' resurrection.⁵⁴

⁵² Ibid., 271.

⁵³ Ibid., 309.

⁵⁴ BE Works, vol. 1, 406.

The concept of role of God as Shepherd cannot be abridged from the sermons in this period. What can be pointed out as other expressions is a Giver of all thing richly to enjoy.⁵⁵

Sermons in 1738-1760

The second period, 1738-1760, following to the division in section B, starts when Wesley had his Aldersgate experience. It is not easy to determine the date of the end of this term. However, considering the movement of holiness revival, the year of 1760 when the concept about holiness experience had been discussed and they came to a certain conclusion about it, was chosen. According to the chronological sequence made by Outler, forty five sermons are included in this period.⁵⁶ The characteristic of this period might come from his crucial experience at Aldersgate. In other words, it can be said that some of the famous sermons made during this period were based on Wesley's personal experience and also deeply related to his theological declaration. Therefore, the sermons in this period are very important in understanding Wesley's concept of the role of God.

The first sermon after the Aldersgate experience was "Salvation by Faith," which was given on June 11, 1738. It seems that the sermons which are more theological than practical, and which play a great role in his theological framework, fall into this period, such as "Free Grace," "The Almost Christian," "Christian Perfection," "Scriptural Christianity," "Justification by Faith," "The Spirit of

⁵⁵ BE Works, vol. 4, 343.

⁵⁶ "The Sermons in Chronological Sequence," 548, ff..

Bondage and of Adoption," "The Witness of the Spirit, Discourse I," "Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount," "Original Sin," "The New Birth," "The Wilderness State," etc..

The quantity of the items which are related to the roles of God amounts to 1,316. In the first period, the most significant one is Creator, which accounts for 21.6 percent of the 245 items, as table 1 shows. However, the change is clearly recognized in the second period. The percent of Creator goes down to just 6.0 percent, while that of Father, which accounts for just 10.6 percent in the first period, goes up to 24.2 percent. Accordingly, even when the number of the roles of God as Creator and King, which symbolize the aspect of the separation of God, come together, it amounts to just 258 items, which is only 19.6 percent of all items. Since the percent for Creator and King in the first period is 36.7, it turns out that the emphasizing point shifts between the first period and the second one. The percent of Father in this period is higher than that of Father of all the sermons, while that of Creator in this period is lower than that of all the sermons. This manifests the characteristic of this period.

Another characteristic recognized concerning the percentage of items is the change in Judge. When the percentage of Judge in the first period which accounts for 11.4 percent, and in the third period which accounts for 10.7 percent, is taken into consideration, the percentage of Judge in the second period is fairly high. This accounts for 16.4 percent. Though it seems difficult to get an accurate figure of the items, this high percentage can be said to be one of the features of this period. That the percent of Revealer goes up to 23.7 percent can be one of the features as well,

though this percent goes up again in the third period to 26.1 percent, which is the most significant item in that period.

It is assumed that Wesley who experientially got the new perspective with the salvation by faith alone through the Aldersgate experience and who got into a new kind of ministry by becoming an out-door preacher through the field-preaching in Bristol might have the tendency of thinking of God as righteous Judge and loving Father. The reason for his change in concept of role of God will be discussed in the following section. In particular, the Aldersgate experience might make a crucial difference, though there are various views about the meaning of Aldersgate in Wesley's life. Needless to say, after 1760, when the discussion had been made about the entire sanctification experience, and Wesley himself tried to wrap up his concept of holiness while seeing the phenomena at that time, Wesley's concept about the role of God also shifted clearly, like the table 1 shows. It will be discussed in a section later.

Interestingly, the personal relationship of God with man, such as the roles of God as Revealer or Father, rather than the aspect of a God of separation with transcendence or sovereignty, is one of the features in Wesley's God, though he strongly approved of God's sovereignty as well. It should be noted that this aspect is the characteristic of the second period. A strong emphasis is particularly on the role of God as Father.

By analyzing the items gathered from Wesley's sermons, the eight roles of God will be described concisely in the following.

Father. As is mentioned earlier, the statements related to the role of God as Father increase in this period compared with the former period. For some reason, almost one fourth of all the statements in this period have to do with Father. An investigation of the quotations from Wesley's sermons shows that there are some tendencies toward this expression.

The term "Father" is used frequently in a general sense. It seems that this is because the Scriptures have the same expression of "Father" that Wesley used in his sermons. Some of them are actually quoted from the Scriptures directly. One of the common expressions is "Father in heaven," or similar expressions. For example, "He indeed is wise who doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."⁵⁷ Sometimes the word, "Father," is discussed in relation to Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The expressions which show what kind of image Wesley had about God, or how Wesley's God worked will be enumerated in the following.

God is the Father who is in heaven, and who should be glorified. In some cases, the expression "Father which is in heaven" is used with the word "glorify" attached. Wesley says, "We may intend that our light should shine before men, when our conscience bears us witness in the Holy Ghost that our ultimate end in designing they should see our good works is that they may glorify our Father which is in heaven."⁵⁸ This "Father" is a perfect Father to Wesley. He states, "till every part of it shall appear in our soul, graven there by the finger of God; till we are holy as

⁵⁷ BE Works, vol. 1, 691.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 574.

he which hath called us is holy, perfect as our Father which is in heaven is perfect!"⁵⁹ Since some of the sermons "Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount" are included in this period, some Scriptural passages are quoted relating to this. Yet, it is interesting that Wesley thought by citing this Scriptural passage that the Father was perfect, and not the Creator or King. The point that we must be perfect as the Father is perfect might make Christian perfection possible to a man who lives on earth, though Wesley did not develop this argument here. It should be noted that Wesley's God was not only a perfect Father, but also was merciful one. He says, "Now, seeing thou canst do all things through Christ strengthening thee, be merciful as thy Father in heaven is merciful."⁶⁰ This Father which is in heaven is in secret as well. Not only being in secret, He "seeth in secret" and "shall reward thee openly."⁶¹ He cited this Scriptural passage repeatedly.

What should be noted secondly is the term "born of God," "born of the Spirit," or "born again." These kind of phrases amount to approximately 50 out of about 300 statements of the role of God as Father. The most frequent one is "born of God." Wesley used family language many times. He says in the sermon "The New Birth," "And when he was baptized he was said to be born again: by which they meant that he who was before a child of the devil was now adopted into the family of God, and

⁵⁹ Ibid., 530.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 697.

⁶¹ Ibid., 386.

accounted one of his children."⁶² Thinking the role of God as Father, Wesley's starting point was a birth experience. It can be said that in Wesley's theology, the Christian experience of "born again" or "born of God" was crucially important, and should be definitely perceived. This expression is interestingly related to the concept of "committing sin." The Scripture, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God," is repeatedly cited in his sermons.⁶³ And that the discussion of committing sin is argued in relation to Christian perfection. To be born of God is essentially important to the Christian experience, without which Christian experience would be in vain. Accordingly, he emphasized this phase. However, the idea that Christians are born to be babes is to be focused upon, since this idea also might be able to give the possibilities of Christian growth and Christian perfection.

Thirdly, the phrase "child of God" appears very often. It seems that in most cases of this expression, it is not used with any other specific connotation. It is not always easy to find a distinct meaning. However, there are some phrases recognized which indicate the meaning of "child of God." To Wesley, a child of God is the one who is justified and redeemed.⁶⁴ He is the one "whom God hath taken out of the world."⁶⁵

⁶² BE Works, vol. 2, 191.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 106.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 104.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 16.

He does not commit sin."⁶⁶ He is a "joint partaker now of the present kingdom of God, and fellow-heir of his eternal kingdom."⁶⁷ He is a heir, heir of God, and joint-heir with Christ."⁶⁸ He is the one who has the possibility of growing up, "till he comes at the full measure of the stature of Christ."⁶⁹ Especially the last one is to be noted since there are some expressions which have similar implications. For example, "your heavenly Father feedeth them."⁷⁰ "For what end, then ... does God permit heaviness to befall so many of this children?"⁷¹ "God kept you longer in that painful school that you might learn those great lessons the more perfectly."⁷² When he says a child of God, it might be related to the father-child relationship which can be seen in a family as a model.

The phrase "child of God" is significant to Wesley. Moreover, he knew the agent who can make it possible. He used the expression "Spirit of adoption" at least seventeen times in the sermons of this period. To most of them, the expression "cry, Abba, Father" is attached. Another thing of the works of the Holy Spirit with regard to "child of God" is that Wesley uses the phrase "bearing witness" when he mentions

⁶⁶ BE Works, vol. 1, 263.

⁶⁷ BE Works, vol. 2, 94.

⁶⁸ BE Works, vol. 1, 423.

⁶⁹ BE Works, vol. 2, 193.

⁷⁰ BE Works, vol. 1, 641.

⁷¹ BE Works, vol. 2, 231.

⁷² Ibid., 31.

child of God. He says in the sermon "The Witness of the Spirit, I," "Thanks be unto God who giveth me to know in whom I have believed; who hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into my heart, crying Abba, Father, and even not bearing witness with my spirit that I am a child of God!"⁷³ Wesley's view was that the Holy Spirit makes it possible for God as Father to have a personal relationship with man.

Fourthly, what cannot be ignored in relation to the role of God as Father is "love." Wesley states in the sermon "The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption," "He cannot fear any longer the wrath of God; for he knows it is now turned away from him, and looks upon him no more as an angry judge, but as a loving Father."⁷⁴ Wesley's God was a loving Father, not just a Father. Almost eighty descriptions can be found here. Like the Scripture says, God Himself is love. Since God is love, Christ hath died.⁷⁵ "As God is love, so man dwelling in love dwelt in God, and God in him."⁷⁶ What God loves is "the world," "us," and "me." The expression "loved me and gave himself for me" shows up some times.⁷⁷ This love seeks our love of God and our love of each other. Wesley's concept of love was this love should be demonstrated by our love of God and neighbours. It can be said that his theme was how I can love God. Furthermore, this should be filial love. He states, "And that filial

⁷³ BE Works, vol. 1, 284.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 261.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 246.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 184.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 194.

love of God was continually increased by the witness he had in himself of God's pardoning love to him, by beholding what manner of love it was which the Father had bestowed upon him, that he should be called a child of God."⁷⁸ The father-child relationship based on love is what God is seeking.

Another phrase recognized is "love of God." Though this expression is used in various ways, what should be pointed out here is that the expression "shed abroad in hearts" is accompanied there. The role of Revealer, who has a personal relationship with man, was also his emphasizing point. He says "the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto us!"⁷⁹

Revealer. The function of God as Revealer is important in Wesley's concept of God, and might be the foundation of his theological framework such areas as theology, Christology, and soteriology. As a matter of fact, the role of God as Revealer was as significant as that of Father at least in the sermons of the second period. The number of the items quoted from the sermons was almost the same, which accounted for approximately three hundred. Even before the experience at Aldersgate, this aspect played a significant role in his theology, while in the third period it becomes the biggest category. Considering the content of this category, this point can be easily accepted, because Wesley's theology might emphasize the personal relationship of God with man. Furthermore, the aspect of sanctification including the experience of entire sanctification becomes one of the main themes in his theology. Without the

⁷⁸ Ibid., 163.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 141.

facet that God functions as Revealer who can be the agent of God's work in man, the personal relationship between God and man is not possible, nor is the theological aspect of sanctification. In fact, the statements in this period are divided into various subjects and expressions.

To begin with, how does the relationship between God and man start? In other words, how does the revealing God have the connection with man? It can be said that Wesley used the very strong terms to show the tie between God and man. The conspicuous verb in his sermons which explains the condition of the tie of God with man is "dwell", which can be found out at least fifteen times in this period. It seems that the verbs "dwell" might be a part of the Scriptural expressions which Wesley quoted in his sermons. He liked the expression, "dwell in God, and God in him." For example, "Thus the veil being removed which before interrupted the might and voice, the knowledge and love of God, he who is born of the Spirit, dwelling in love, dwelleth in God and God in him."⁸⁰ Though they are Scriptural phrases in most cases, it is noted that Wesley's concept of the relationship of God with man had to be expressed by a strong term that denotes someone dwelling in someone. It means a strong deep relationship from one person to another person, not mechanical nor automatic. It also means a continuous connection, and not a temporary one.

Other than that phrase, the ones which have similar connotation appear sometimes such as "abide in him," "Spirit rest upon thee," "Christ live in me," "receive the Holy Spirit," "Holy Ghost is given," "partakers of the Holy Ghost," "hid

⁸⁰ Ibid., 435.

with Christ in God," etc.. It is noted here that interestingly, the expression, "filled with the Holy Ghost," which has been used in Wesleyan tradition often, is not used so much as is expected. It seems that "filled with the Holy Spirit" has been one of the most important expressions which indicate the role of God as Revealer especially in Wesleyan tradition. However, Wesley himself did not stick to this verb alone for some reason in order to show the deep relationship of God with man. It might be because of the historical background such as a caution against enthusiasm. Further study will be needed in this area.

Secondly, the work of God as Revealer will be analyzed. As a general expression, "work of the Spirit" or "work in heart" appears repeatedly. For example, in the sermon "Hypocrisy in Oxford," Wesley says "Who feels in himself the working of the Spirit of Christ, drawing up his mind to high and heavenly things?"⁸¹ Other expressions, "speak," "declare," "direct," which indicate the work of God as Revealer, are also reiterated.⁸² Wesley's God was not only the One who speaks to man, but also one who teaches. The verb "teach" appears repeatedly. For example, he says, "And God teaches it to every soul who is willing to hear his voice."⁸³ Other than these general expression which shows the work of God as Revealer, the expression goes into so many aspects in his sermons. The various expressions which appear in his

⁸¹ BE Works, vol. 4. 406.

⁸² BE Works, vol. 1, 394.

⁸³ BE Works, vol. 2, 249.

sermons will be enumerated. "God alone can *reveal* this by his Spirit."⁸⁴ "If we give way to the spirit of offence but one hour we lose the sweet *influences* of the Holy Spirit."⁸⁵ "He it is that inspires the Christian soul with that even, solid joy which arises from the testimony of the Spirit that he is a child of God."⁸⁶ "With the help of experience and reason, and the ordinary *assistance* of the Spirit of God."⁸⁷ etc.. This shows that the expression indicating the work of God as Revealer goes into the various aspects, and Wesley's God was the One who wants to have a deep relationship with man person to person.

The aspect of the work of Revealer is being emphasized specifically. The verbal phrase "bear witness" is employed affirmatively, while the word "conviction" is used negatively. The expression "bear witness" or "witness of the Spirit" appears at least twenty eight times, and that of "testimony of the Spirit" twelve times. The interesting thing here is that when the expression "bear witness" is used, most of occurrences are related to the expression "child of God," or that which has a similar connotation. He states in the sermon "The Mark of the New Birth,"

Let us well observe what is here taught us by God himself touching this glorious privilege of his children. Who is it that is here said to bear witness? Not our spirit only, but another; even the Spirit of God. He it is who beareth witness with our spirit. What is it he beareth witness of? That we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with

⁸⁴ Ibid., 8.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 210.

⁸⁶ BE Works, vol. 1, 223.

⁸⁷ BE Works, vol. 2, 59.

Christ."⁸⁸

It can be said that the doctrine of the assurance of faith is one of the important theological facets in Wesley's theological framework from this data. On the other hand, when he uses the expression "conviction," it contains the negative aspect which is related to "sin." He says, "For it is still of unspeakable use, first, in convincing us of the sin that yet remains both in our hearts and lives, and thereby keeping us close to Christ, that his blood may cleanse us every moment."⁸⁹ Wesley's God was the One who did give the conviction of sin and bear witness that he was a child of God. Since Wesley's God was also God as Father, the work as Revealer is deeply related to that of a loving Father. Therefore, love becomes the underlying theme even in the role of God as Revealer, which is what this data about Revealer also indicate. The doctrine of assurance of faith, which is the work of God as Revealer, cannot be discussed without the concept of a loving Father in Wesley's mind. Because of the love of God, He wants man to know that He Himself as Revealer is a loving Father and that they are the children of God. He speaks about the love of God in the sermon "The Great Privilege of those that are Born of God," "He now knows what the peace of God is; what is joy in the Holy Ghost; what the love of God which is shed abroad in the hearts of them that believe through Christ Jesus."⁹⁰ This is also the work of God as Revealer. The expression, "the love of God shed abroad in the

⁸⁸ BE Works, vol. 1, 423.

⁸⁹ BE Works, vol. 2, 17.

⁹⁰ BE Works, vol. 1, 435.

hearts," appears often in his sermons.

It seems that, thirdly, as to the means that God as Revealer used, Wesley emphasized at least two categories: Scripture, and Jesus Christ. Though he emphasized the Holy Spirit as the work of God as Revealer as is mentioned earlier, he never forgot the rather objective aspect of revelation which is shown in the Scripture and Jesus Christ who became a Man. Scripture is the important means for God as Revealer to reveal Himself. With Scripture and Jesus Christ, he states, "They trembling believe both that Jesus is the Christ and that all Scripture, having been given by inspiration of God, is true as God is true."⁹¹ Wesley highly esteems the authenticity of Scripture and Jesus Christ. There are only a few specific statements about Scripture. To Wesley, Scripture was the Word of God, or the inspiration of God. He quotes a Scriptural passage in his sermon, saying, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God (consequently, all Scripture is infallibly true), and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; to the end that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."⁹² The infallibility of the Scriptures was Wesley's view.

With Jesus Christ, the word "reconcile" is recognized some times in his sermons. Reconciliation is the work of God as Revealer through Jesus Christ. He says, "Therefore believing in God as reconciling the world to himself through Christ Jesus, the believing in him as a loving, pardoning God, is the first great branch of

⁹¹ Ibid., 418.

⁹² Ibid., 388.

his service."⁹³

Judge. The role of God as righteous Judge is the third largest one in this period. It account for approximately sixteen percent. The percent of the role of God as Judge in this period is the largest compared with other periods, which accounts for approximately ten percent. The role of God as Judge, which is described as Governor in Wesley's direct statement, is the watershed between the Calvinistic view and the Wesleyan view.⁹⁴ It was an extremely significant element that God was not only a sovereign King, but also a righteous Judge. The percents of the three roles of God goes up, while those of other roles go down after the Aldersgate experience. Three roles are Father, Revealer, and Judge. It is interesting that in this period after the Aldersgate experience, Wesley valued the role of God as Judge more highly than in other periods of his life. Although the items amount to more than two hundred, the content can be divided into just a few groupings.

First, he used the term "righteous Judge" in his sermons. To Wesley, God was not only a Creator and King, but also a righteous Judge. In the sermon "Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, I," he states,

This inward kingdom implies also 'joy in the Holy Ghost', who seals upon our hearts 'the redemption which is in Jesus', the righteousness of Christ, imputed to us for 'the remission of the sins that are past': who giveth us now 'the earnest of our inheritance' of the crown which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give at that day.⁹⁵

⁹³ Ibid., 634.

⁹⁴ Works, vol. 10, 361.

⁹⁵ BE Works, vol. 1, 481.

The fact that God is a righteous Judge is based on His character. In the sermon "The New Birth," he tries to explain the image of God in relation to the Creation, and mentions the character of God. He says,

Not barely in his *natural image*, a picture of his own immortality, a spiritual being endued with understanding, freedom of will, and various affections; nor merely in his *political image*, the governor of this lower world, having 'dominion over the fishes of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth'; but chiefly in his *moral image*, which, according to the Apostle, is 'righteousness and true holiness'. In this image of God was man made. 'God is love:' accordingly man at his creation was full of love, which was the sole principle of all his tempers, thoughts, words, and action. God is full of justice, mercy, and truth: so was man as he came from the hands of his Creator. God is spotless purity: and so man was in the beginning pure from every sinful blot.⁹⁶

This statement shows that God's attributes should be well balanced, without being one-sided. Wesley did not deny the transcendent Creator. However, he thought that other attributes had to be attached to it without inconsistency. In particular, he emphasized the attribute of "love," and also of "justice, mercy, and truth." Wesley's God had the attribute of "justice." Other attributes such as mercy or truth also must not be ignored. Although Wesley's God was the One who has justice, this attribute has to be discussed in the context that God is a transcendent Creator and a loving Father as well.

The attribute of "justice" is discussed in his sermons in various ways. First, the righteous Judge is a giver of His standard. Mainly two expressions are adopted: "commandments of God" and "law of God." For example, he says, "He does not observe one, or some parts, of the law of God, and neglect the rest; but keeps all his

⁹⁶ BE Works, vol. 2, 188.

commandments, loves them all, values them above gold or precious stones."⁹⁷ The word "commandment" appears at least fourteen times, while "law of God" does at least seventeen times in the sermon in this period. It should be noted that the concept of "commandment of God" is also discussed in the context of the perception of love. To Wesley, "Love is the end of all the commandments of God."⁹⁸

Secondly, the righteous Judge is the God who requires man to obey the commandments and the law of God entirely. The expression to show this obedience is very strong. In the sermon "Justification by Faith," he says,

To man thus upright and perfect God gave a perfect law, to which he required full and perfect obedience. He required full obedience in every point, and his to be performed without any intermission from the moment man became a living soul till the time of his trial should be ended.⁹⁹

Once God gives His law to man, man is responsible to obey it and observe it. Since the law is perfect, it requires man to obey perfectly and entirely. There is no compromise at all. However, it should be noted that the concept of love is underlying even the phase of perfect obedience. To Wesley, "Christian joy is joy in obedience - joy in loving God and keeping his commandments."¹⁰⁰ In the sermon "The Marks of the New Birth," he especially mentions the connection of commands of God with the concept of love,

A second fruit then of the love of God (so far as it can be distinguished from

⁹⁷ BE Works, vol. 1, 567.

⁹⁸ BE Works, vol. 2, 38.

⁹⁹ BE Works, vol. 1, 184.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 312.

it) is universal obedience to him we love, and conformity to his will; obedience to all the commands of God, internal and external; obedience of the heart and of the life, in every temper and in all manner of conversation.¹⁰¹

This statement is important because it gives the possibility of obedience to God. Without the concept of love, there is no possibility of the entire observance of God's law and the full obedience to God's commandments. In other words, if God is just the sovereign King, man cannot survive any more under His tyrant will. If God is just the righteous Judge, imperfect man cannot stand before Him because of His wrath. However, since the concept of love is underlying the concept of righteous Judge as well, it makes a full obedience of man to God possible theologically. It is one of the features in Wesleyanism that the concept of love is underlying other aspects of theology.

Thirdly, since the righteous Judge is the God who requires man to obey the commandments and the law of God entirely as is mentioned earlier, He naturally gives a reward to good things and a punishment to sins. The reward and the punishment are given according to His perfect justice. Particularly, the aspect of punishment is discussed. The most remarkable expression which can be found is "wrath of God." The analysis shows that the expression "wrath of God" or "wrath to come" appears at least twenty nine times in his sermons in this period. The true meaning of "wrath of God" needs to be analyzed in context. The expression itself is strong, and the meaning of it is also strong. His understanding of "wrath of God" is described in the sermon "The Righteousness of Faith."

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 427.

That we cannot by any of our righteousness (for indeed we have none at all) nor by any of our works (for they are as the tree from which they grow) appease the wrath of God, or avert the punishment we have justly deserved? Yea, that if left to ourselves we shall only wax worse and worse, sink deeper and deeper into sin, offend God more and more both with our evil works and with the evil tempers of our carnal mind, till we find up the measure of our iniquities, and bring upon ourselves swift destruction?¹⁰²

According to Wesley's understanding, nothing of man's righteousness and of man's works can appease the wrath of God. However, an interesting thing is that the perception of wrath of God is used together with the concept of a conviction of sin.

But suppose there were added to all this a deep conviction of sin, with much fear of the wrath of God; vehement desires to cast off every sin, and to fulfil all righteousness; frequent rejoicing in hope, and touches of love often glancing upon the soul: yet neither do these prove a man to be 'under grace', to have true, living, Christian faith, unless the Spirit of adoption abide in his heart, unless he can continually cry, 'Abba, Father!'¹⁰³

As a negative aspect, wrath of God gives the conviction of "his lost estate."¹⁰⁴ It causes "sorrow for sin."¹⁰⁵ It gives not only sorrow for sin, but "vehement desires to cast off every sin, [...]."¹⁰⁶ It makes man realize that "inward parts are very wickedness, that thou are altogether corrupt and abominable, [...]."¹⁰⁷ Wrath of God is not exercised in order to punish and damn sinners. It rather urges man to realize

¹⁰² Ibid., 212-213.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 266.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 691.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 598.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 266.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 653.

the real situation of man, to be able to fulfill righteousness, and to obtain blessings.¹⁰⁸ The negative viewpoint that God's wrath damns man forcibly is hardly recognized. Rather, it can be said that his idea of wrath of God has a positive direction.

Another expression which is repeated in his sermons is "judge," or "judgment of God." The connotation of this term is different from that of "wrath of God." The observation shows that interestingly, some expressions of "wrath of God" are related to the concept of conviction to urge man to realize his real situation in the present context, whereas the expression "judge" or "judgment of God" is used in a future context, namely, eschatologically. Needless to say, this "judgment of the all-wise God is always according to truth."¹⁰⁹ So, it is the righteous judgment of God as Wesley says.

The final analysis of the role of God as Judge is the solution of the problems through the righteous judgment of God. He emphasizes that the righteousness is not of my own, but of God.¹¹⁰ Since it is God's righteousness, it is perfect, and does not admit any compromises there. What is required in order to get the perfect righteousness of God is described in some expressions in his sermons: "pardon," "forgiveness of sins," and "justification." It seems that to Wesley, forgiveness and justification have almost the same meanings as each other. He mentions justification

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 602.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 188.

¹¹⁰ BE Works, vol. 2, 148.

in contrast to new birth.

If any doctrines within the whole compass of Christianity may be properly termed fundamental they are doubtless these two – the doctrine of justification, and that of the new birth: the former relating to that great work which God does *for us*, in forgiving our sins; the latter to the great work which God does *in us*, in renewing our fallen nature.¹¹¹

Justification is God's work done for us, given for us perfectly freely. It is offered freely "through the blood of his Son."¹¹² It is also given because of God's love. As a similar expression to forgiveness, he uses the word "pardon." It should be noted that the expression of pardon in his sermon sometimes seems to be related to the concept of love.¹¹³ This grace is obtained by faith. The expression "righteousness which is of God by faith" is recognized at least eight times. The foundation is God's love and Jesus' redemption, and the means is man's faith. Love is the significant element in Wesley's theology, and the way of "by faith" is derived from His love. It makes justification possible before a perfectly righteous Judge.

King. The role of God as King is the fourth largest one in this period. It account for thirteen percent approximately of all items. Since in the first period it accounts for fifteen percent, and in the third period sixteen percent, it can be said that the value of the role of God as King in Wesley's mind hardly changed through all the periods in his life. Although Wesley's concern shifted from God as Creator to God as Father after the experience at Aldersgate, his idea of sovereign King still remained

¹¹¹ Ibid., 187.

¹¹² Ibid., 150.

¹¹³ Ibid., 234.

unchangeably in his mind. Because it was Wesley's theological position that all these four aspects of a transcendent God as Creator, a sovereign God as King, and an immanent God as Revealer and a loving God as Father are valued without being one-sided, and are not inconsistent one another.

When he said God was a sovereign King, it contained several aspects. First, it has an extremely strong image such as "throne of God" and "perfect will of God." He is also the God who should be glorified.¹¹⁴ The expression "glory of God" appears at least twenty three times.¹¹⁵

Secondly, at least three attributes of God as King are noted in his sermons of this period. The first one is the omnipotence of God. God is called Almighty. Wesley says, "'Almighty God ... hath promised forgiveness of sins to all them who with hearty repentance and true faith turn unto him.'"¹¹⁶ The second thing is omniscience of God. God knows everything. In the sermon "The Almost Christian" Wesley says,

Remember 'always to pray and not to faint', till thou also canst lift up thy hand unto heaven and declare to him that liveth for ever and ever, 'Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee.'¹¹⁷

Not only He knows everything generally, but also what He knows goes into concrete, various, and inner things of man such as imagination, thoughts, inward man, spirit

¹¹⁴ BE Works, vol. 3, 546.

¹¹⁵ BE Works, vol. 2, 223.

¹¹⁶ BE Works, vol. 1, 278.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 141.

within man, the principle of all his inward and outward motions.¹¹⁸

The third thing is wisdom of God. He says,

O that all these sons 'of the right hand of the Most High' may be holy as he is holy! Wise with the 'wisdom that sitteth by his throne', like him who is the eternal wisdom of the Father!¹¹⁹

The image of the wisdom mentioned here is just like that of sovereign King. The wisdom is what is necessary as a sovereign King. One thing which should be noted here is that God's wisdom is used together with other attributes of God such as justice, power, mercy.¹²⁰ These elements do not conflict, nor are inconsistent with one another. This balance is a key feature of Wesleyan theology.

Thirdly, this God as King does not remain separated from man, but comes into space to have some relationships with man and to make his territory within man. One of the most remarkable expressions concerning the role of God as King is the "kingdom of God" or "kingdom of heaven." It is found at least thirty five times. When the term "kingdom" is used, the picture of King is discussed in the sense that God as King comes into space with immanence, not as a separated One. In the sermon "Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, I," he states,

This is that kingdom of heaven or of God which is 'within' us, even 'righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost'. And what is righteousness but the life of God in the soul, the mind which was in Christ Jesus, the image of God stamped upon the heart, now renewed after the likeness of him that created

¹¹⁸ BE Works, vol. 2, 174.

¹¹⁹ BE Works, vol. 1, 371.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 364.

it?¹²¹

To Wesley, the "kingdom of God" is formed within us, and it means righteousness, peace, and joy caused by the work of the Holy Spirit. "Kingdom of God" means man's soul or heart where God dwells by faith, and Christ reigns by love.¹²² In this sense, the role of God as King is related to some extent to the role of God as Revealer.

He does not only want to have relationships with man by making His kingdom within man, but also he seeks man's proper reaction which should be given to the King. What He seeks is "to present our souls and bodies, all we are and all we have, all our thoughts, words, and actions, a continual sacrifice to God, acceptable through Christ Jesus."¹²³ He also wants to reign without a rival and "possess all our heart, and rule alone."¹²⁴ Although He reigns within a man without a rival as a King, the connotation is also related to the aspect of God as Revealer. It is also a Wesleyan perspective that, while being a sovereign King, He wants to have a personal relationship with man as a Revealer.

Priest. There are about one hundred items with the role of God as Priest in this period. The percent goes down as the period goes by. It seems that Wesley had hardly valued this aspect, compared with other aspect such as Revealer, Judge, and Father.

¹²¹ Ibid., 481.

¹²² Ibid., 583.

¹²³ BE Works, vol. 2, 194.

¹²⁴ BE Works, vol. 1, 642.

First, there are three verbs adopted to show the work as Priest: sanctify, purify, and cleanse. Though there are not so big difference among them in terms of the connotation, "sanctify" is mainly used as the work of the Spirit. He says, "I, whom he hath justified through the blood of his Son, being thoroughly sanctified by his Spirit, shall quickly ascend to the 'New Jerusalem, the city of the living God'."¹²⁵ "Purify" is used in the context that the object of that verb is soul, heart, or something coming out of heart such as pride, self-will, passion, love of the world, etc..

Another thing which should be noted as the work of Priest is the work of Jesus Christ. There are some statements which shows that reconciliation was made by Jesus Christ. For example, he says,

To preach Christ as a workman that needeth not to be ashamed is to preach him not only as our great 'High Priest, taken from among men, and ordained for men, in things pertaining to God'; as such, 'reconciling us to God by his blood', and 'ever living to make intercession for us'; [...].¹²⁶

Other than that, he sometimes quotes the Scriptural passage in 1 John 1:7. Yet specific theological issues which should be pointed out can not be recognized.

Creator. This role of God is in first place during the period before Aldersgate, which accounts for twenty one percent. However, the percent after the Aldersgate is much lower than that, which accounts for just six percent. The aspect of King does not change so much from before and after the Aldersgate, while the value in Wesley's

¹²⁵ BE Works, vol. 2, 150.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 37.

mind rapidly shifted from Creator to other roles of God, especially Revealer and Father. Though it cannot be said that the role of God as Creator is not important to Wesley any more after Aldersgate, he rather emphasized the aspect of Revealer and Father. This change should be noticed.

The content of this category can be summarized mainly into two concepts. The first thing which should be noted is that man is created after the "image of God." He used this exact expression at least twenty three times in the sermons of this period. In the sermon "Justification by Faith," he explains the meaning of the fact that man was created after the image of God.

In the image of God was man made; holy as he that created him is holy, merciful as the author of all is merciful, perfect as his Father in heaven is perfect. As God is love, so man dwelling in love dwelt in God, and God in him. God made him to be 'an image of his own eternity', an incorruptible picture of the God of glory. He was accordingly pure, as God is pure, from every spot of sin. He knew not evil in any kind or degree, but was inwardly and outwardly sinless and undefiled. He 'loved the Lord his God with all his heart, and with all his mind, and soul, and strength'.¹²⁷

The image of holy, perfect, love, etc. is included there. The second thing which should be noted is the fact that "the best end a fallen creature can pursue is the recovery of the favour and image of God."¹²⁸ Wesley's main theme was the possibility of the recovery of the image of God corrupted by sin, and the renewal is made into righteousness and true holiness. He says,

He rejoiced in him 'with joy unspeakable', who 'had reconciled him to God, even the Father'; 'in whom he had redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of

¹²⁷ BE Works, vol. 1, 184.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 213.

sins.' He rejoiced in that 'witness of God's Spirit with his spirit that he was a child of God'; and more abundantly 'in hope of the glory of God'; in hope of the glorious image of God, the full 'renewal of his soul in righteousness and true holiness'; and in hope of that 'crown of glory', that 'inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away'.¹²⁹

It is extremely important since this scheme is developed and magnified into his soteriology, and the full recovery into righteousness and true holiness is underlying his theological framework.

Another thing noticed is that God is a Physician, a subcategory of God as Creator. Though there are only few statements, he indeed used the word "physician" or "heal" in his sermons. In the sermon "Original Sin," He says, "Hereby the great Physician of souls applies medicine to heal this sickness; to restore human nature, totally corrupted in all its faculties."¹³⁰

Redeemer. It seems that the concept that God is Redeemer is not so important as other roles such as Revealer, Father, King, and Judge. Actually, according to the table 1, this item remains at almost six through his life. The experience to make the divisions such as Aldersgate did not make a difference.

The content of the items can be abridged into four concepts: save or salvation, power of God, redeem or redeemer, and deliver or free. About the word, "save" or "salvation," any specific tendency of connotation is hardly recognized. When the word "power of God" is used, it is described as the power to cast out an evil spirit or to destroy the works of the devil, the power to bring man unto salvation, and the

¹²⁹ Ibid., 162.

¹³⁰ BE Works, vol. 2, 184.

power of Resurrection. In the sermon "A Caution against Bigotry," he says,

By the power of God attending his Word he brings these sinners to repentance: an entire inward as well as outward change, from all evil to all good. And this is in a sound sense to 'cast out devils', out of the souls wherein they had hitherto dwelt.¹³¹

The power of God brings sinners to repentance, which is described several times in other portions as "power of God unto salvation." It also has the victory over the demons, casting them out of their hearts. When he uses the term "redeem or redemption," it refers to the work of Jesus Christ. He says,

Knowing they were redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, a Lamb without spot and without blemish', they had, through the 'faith and hope which they had in God', 'purified their souls by the Spirit'.¹³²

The expression, "redemption that is in Jesus Christ," is also used several times.¹³³

Finally, through the redemption of Jesus Christ, the perfect freedom is given to man, like he says in the sermon "Christian Perfection," "'delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God.'"¹³⁴

Shepherd. The percent remains almost one through all this period. It seems that, though the content of this category is significant, the rather static image which this category has did not fit Wesley's dynamic understanding of his religion.

Mainly two concepts can be picked up in this category: goodness of God, and follower of Christ. In the sermon "Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, II," he

¹³¹ Ibid., 68.

¹³² Ibid., 224.

¹³³ Ibid., 148.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 121.

says,

God shall satisfy them with the blessings of his goodness, with the felicity of his chosen. He shall feed them with the bread of heaven, with the manna of his love. He shall give them to drink of his pleasure, as out of the river which he that drinketh of shall never thirst - only for more and more of the water of life. This thirst shall endure for ever.¹³⁵

Wesley's God was the One who is able to supply anything which is needed sufficiently.

"He knoweth your wants; and whatsoever is lacking he will not fail to supply."¹³⁶

In response to His sufficient supply, man is urged to follow Him, though it is not always easy for him to follow Christ, "'taking up his cross daily'."¹³⁷

Others. Two roles are noticed: Helper and Giver. In particular, the statements of His being a Giver will be discussed here. He discusses the gift of God as to what He gives man. The items are "ability," "understanding," "health," "talent," etc..¹³⁸ In response to His gift man is expected to be a good steward.¹³⁹

Sermons in 1762-1791

The third period, 1762-1791, following the division in section B, covers Wesley's time of life when the arguments over entire sanctification broke out. Wesley himself was involved in the theological debate, he saw the phenomena of the holiness revival movement, and he ministered while thinking that the entire sanctification should be

¹³⁵ BE Works, vol. 1, 497.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 644.

¹³⁷ BE Works, vol. 2, 244.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 518.

¹³⁹ BE Works, vol. 1, 548.

experienced biblically. This phase of sanctification and its practical applications for Methodists is one of the main themes in his sermons at this time. According to the chronological sequence of Outler, eighty six sermons are listed in this period.¹⁴⁰ Actually some of the sermons made in this period have a rather practical content than theological and theoretical. Therefore, the sermons in this period are important in a different sense from the second period, because the roles of God are developed and spelled out to the application in the context of the holiness movement and Christians', especially Methodists' holy lives. In other words, it should be noticed that the focus of this period is not on theological issues but practical applications of Christian life. The first sermon was "Wandering Thoughts," which was given in 1762. It seems that the sermons which are rather practical than theological mainly fall into this period, such as "On Family Religion," "On the Education of Children," "On Obedience to Parents," etc..

The number of items which are related to the roles of God amounts to 1,576. In the second period, the most frequent one is loving Father, which accounts for 24.2 percent out of the 1,316 items, as table 1 shows. However, the change is definitely recognized in the third period. The percent of Creator in the third period goes up to 14.8 percent from just 6.0 percent in the second period, while that of Father, which accounts for 24.2 percent in the second period, goes down to 16.6 percent in the third period. The most frequent one in the third period is the role of God as Revealer, which accounts for 26.1 percent. This might be a feature of the third period, if it

¹⁴⁰ "The Sermons in Chronological Sequence," 548, ff..

could be said that the focal point in the second period was what Wesley got by going through the evangelical conversion at Aldersgate street. In comparison to the second period, the focal point in the third period was the theological understanding of the experience of entire sanctification and the phenomena of the holiness movement which occurred in the 1760s.

The eight roles of God will be described briefly in the following, by analyzing the items gathered directly from Wesley's sermons in the third period.

Revealer. As table 1 shows, the role of God as Revealer is the biggest one in this period, which accounts for approximately twenty six percent. Thinking that the focal point in this period is on the holiness movement and its theological interpretation, it is plausible to shift from the role of God as Father to that of Revealer. The first impression of the data is that the change of the usage of the terms in this period can be hardly recognized when they are compared with those in the second period. As a matter of fact, the expression and the content of this section vary. However, the analysis and the summary of the data gathered from the sermons after the 1760s will be made in the following.

First of all, the relationship of God with man will be discussed. How does God, especially the Holy Spirit, begin to have a relationship with man? Wesley employed the expression "pour out the Holy Ghost" in order to show the phenomena in the seventeenth century. "And in the year 1627 there was a wonderful pouring out of the Spirit in several parts of England, as well as in Scotland and the north of

Ireland."¹⁴¹ When he mentioned the second chapter of the Book of Acts, he also used the same expression, to describe the phenomena of the early church. He says, "Soon after the pouring out of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, in the infancy of the Christian church, there was indeed a glorious change."¹⁴² It is likely that in Wesley's mind the personal relationship of the Holy Spirit with man is compared with the phenomena in the Early Church. He probably thought that God had relationships with man in the sense that the Holy Ghost was poured out in the second chapter of Acts. As similar expressions, "rest upon," "put my Spirit within you," etc. are recognized.¹⁴³ Though it is also mentioned earlier in the section of the second period, the expression "filled with the Holy Ghost," which is popularly adopted especially in Wesleyan tradition, is hardly recognized. It is interesting that he seldom used this phrase to show Christian experiences for some reason. Just five statements can be found in the sermons of the third period. And that there are just three expressions of "filled with the Holy Ghost." For example,

And it was then a glorious church; all the members thereof being 'filled with the Holy Ghost', 'being of one heart and of one mind', 'and continuing steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, and in fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers'.¹⁴⁴

Some expression can be enumerated as the words to indicate the situation or condition of the personal relationship of God with man. The most remarkable one is

¹⁴¹ BE Works, vol. 2, 557.

¹⁴² BE Works, vol. 3, 469.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 78.

¹⁴⁴ BE Works, vol. 2, 554.

"dwell in." The tendency to use this expression is in line with the second period. He used this very strong expression in order to show the tie between God and man. Wesley's God not only wanted to have a relationship with man, but also He expected the strong connection which is shown by expressions such as "dwell in." Some of them are discussed in relation to love.¹⁴⁵ This strong tie is described with other expressions such as "fellowship or intercourse," "communion," "presence of God," etc..¹⁴⁶ The Christians who dwell in God, and in whom God dwells are called "temples of the Holy Ghost."¹⁴⁷ Another expression noticed is "partaker of the Spirit."¹⁴⁸ It seems that this has almost the same meaning.

Secondly, the work of God as Revealer will be discussed. What should be especially noticed here is the issue of assurance of faith. Some expressions, "Spirit bearing witness," "Spirit of God witnesses," "testimony of God's Spirit," etc. are employed in order to indicate this work of the Holy Ghost. Also many items can be found concerning this topic. The main text of this issue is "The Witness of the Spirit, II." However, the statements concerning the assurance of faith can be found from several sermons such as "On Sin in Believers," "The Scripture Way of Salvation," "On Predestination," "On Faith," "On Conscience," "On Trinity," etc.. He mentions this doctrine often in his sermons. It can be said that this topic is underlying his

¹⁴⁵ BE Works, vol. 3, 321.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 90.

¹⁴⁷ BE Works, vol. 1, 326.

¹⁴⁸ BE Works, vol. 2, 220.

theological framework, and is one of the significant aspects of his theology. In the sermon "The Witness of the Spirit, II," he says,

It has been confirmed, both in this and in all ages, by 'a cloud of' living and dying 'witnesses'. It is confirmed by *your* experience and *mine*. The Spirit itself bore witness to my spirit that I was a child of God, gave me an evidence hereof, and I immediately cried, 'Abba, Father!' And this I did (and so did you) before I reflected on, or was conscious of, any fruit of the Spirit. It was from this testimony received that love, joy, peace, and the whole fruit of the Spirit flowed.¹⁴⁹

Though he also emphasized the work of the Holy Spirit Who bears witness in the second period, a new development in the argument can be recognized in this period. In particular, he divided "testimony" into two: direct one and indirect one. He says, "It is manifest, here are two witnesses mentioned, who together testify the same thing - the Spirit of God, and our own spirit."¹⁵⁰ Direct testimony is "an inward impression on the souls of believers, whereby the Spirit of God directly testifies to their spirit that they are children of God."¹⁵¹ He thought that this testimony is not the products of man's thought and the phenomena which can be recognized in man's personality as the token of God blessings. The direct work of the Holy Spirit gives the impression that they are children of God, not the inference of man. On the other hand, by indirect testimony he meant a "testimony of the Spirit than that which arises from a consciousness of the fruit."¹⁵² It is also described as "the conscious-

¹⁴⁹ BE Works, vol. 1, 290.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 288.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 296.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 288.

ness of our walking in all righteousness and true holiness."¹⁵³ This testimony is rather derived from man's inference based on the Spirit's fruit – love, peace, joy.¹⁵⁴ He thought that if faith truly worked in someone's heart, some fruits of the Spirit might come out. By their fruits they are assured that they are children of God. This is the indirect testimony of the Spirit. An indirect testimony follows a direct one which is given by the Holy Spirit.¹⁵⁵ It should be noted that what the Spirit bears witness is that we are children of God. This appears repeatedly.¹⁵⁶ In this period as well as in the previous one, the work of God as Revealer is deeply connected to the work of God as Father. He also used the expression "the Spirit of adoption."¹⁵⁷

In relation to the aspect that the work of God as Revealer is connected to that of Father, Wesley states that "the love of God, [...], is shed abroad in the heart" by the Holy Ghost which is given unto him.¹⁵⁸ This expression appears at least eighteen times in the sermons of this period. In the sense that his concept of love is underlying the idea of role of Revealer as well as that of Father, these two aspects of God fairly overlap each other. Wesley's point of emphasis was that God worked in us as a Revealer, and that this was also derived from God's love.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 298.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 297.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid..

¹⁵⁶ BE Works, vol. 3, 498.

¹⁵⁷ BE Works, vol. 1, 289.

¹⁵⁸ BE Works, vol. 3, 96.

The second point is how God as Revealer works in us. First of all, he stressed that God's work is inward. The expression "work in you/us" is used repeatedly, at least twenty five times in this period. Wesley says, "And being entrusted with the oracles of God, they have known that 'God hath also given us his Holy Spirit,' who 'worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure'."¹⁵⁹ The inwardness of God's work gives the influence both on intention and behaviour. The expression "to will and to do" is attached repeatedly. It can be said that this is one of the Wesleyan points of view.

In terms of the concrete works and influences of the Holy Spirit, there are many accounts and descriptions in his sermons. The Holy Spirit speaks, and directs.¹⁶⁰ He gives guidance.¹⁶¹ He gives the inspiration which gives understanding.¹⁶² He also "open[s] the eyes of our understanding."¹⁶³ He teaches.¹⁶⁴ He gives an unction.¹⁶⁵ Particularly, He gives us the ability to do diverse ministries. The phrase "enable us to do something" is used in various ways. He enables us to "walk as Christ also walked," to "testify," to "understand what the Holy Scriptures

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 201.

¹⁶⁰ BE Works, vol. 4, 70.

¹⁶¹ BE Works, vol. 2, 599.

¹⁶² BE Works, vol. 3, 389.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 129.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 341.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 486.

declare," to "comprehend God's method of dealing with the children of men," to "believe in Jesus," to "preach," to "love God with all your heart," etc..¹⁶⁶

Another thing which should be noted is the work of Revealer as a giver of conviction. It seems that the concept about conviction in this period was almost the same as that in the second period. This term is used in the context of sin passages. It refers especially to the experience which is called entire sanctification. It is the work of the Holy Spirit which shows that sin remains in our heart.¹⁶⁷ In the sermon "The Repentance of Believers," he says,

On the contrary, a deep conviction that we are not yet whole, that our hearts are not fully purified, that there is yet in us 'a carnal mind' which is still in its nature 'enmity against God'; that a whole body of sin remains in our heart, weakened indeed, but not destroyed, shows beyond all possibility of doubt the absolute necessity of a farther change. We allow that at the very moment of justification we are 'born again': in that instant we experience that inward change from 'darkness into marvellous light'; from the image of the brute and the devil into the image of God, from the earthly, sensual, devilish mind, to the mind which was in Christ Jesus. But are we then *entirely* changed? Are we *wholly* transformed into the image of him that created us? Far from it: we still retain a depth of sin; and it is the consciousness of this which constrains us to groan for a full deliverance to him that is mighty to save. Hence it is that those believers who are not convinced of the deep corruption of their hearts, or but slightly and as it were notionally convinced, have little concern about *entire sanctification*.¹⁶⁸

However, a conviction does not stop here, according to Wesley. A conviction is the confidence that God has promised sanctification in the Holy Scripture, and God is able to perform what He has promised. It does not only convince us of having sin

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 501.

¹⁶⁷ BE Works, vol. 2, 165.

¹⁶⁸ BE Works, vol. 1, 350-351.

remaining, but also encourages us to receive God's grace. It should be noted that the concept of conviction has a positive aspect.

This work of the Holy Spirit is also mentioned from the perspective of the function of conscience in the sermon "On Conscience." Wesley says, "it is his Spirit who giveth thee an inward check, who causeth thee to feel uneasy, when thou walkest in any instance contrary to the light which he hath given thee."¹⁶⁹ This is also the conviction in the context of Christian life.

As the means of revealing, two things can be recognized in his sermons: the Word of God, and Jesus Christ. No more discussion will be made about it since this has been mentioned in the second period.

Father. This aspect in this period is not so emphasized as in the second period. However, it is still an important element in Wesley's sermons. It accounts for approximately sixteen percent.

First of all, Wesley discusses the argument about Christian life on the assumption that Christians might grow spiritually, though there are not many statements showing it. To grow as a Christian means to grow in holiness, in love, in every part of the image of God.¹⁷⁰ The goal of growing as a Christian is to be like Jesus, being made "into the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."¹⁷¹ In relation to the Christians' possibility of growing spiritually, Wesley was willing to

¹⁶⁹ BE Works, vol. 3, 482.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 175.

¹⁷¹ BE Works, vol. 4, 67.

adopt the family languages such as father, born of God, babe in Christ, child of God, and love, in order to describe the Christian experience and the Christian life. Some points will be enumerated in the following.

The aspect that a Christian is a "child/children of God" is fairly emphasized. In the sermon "In What Sense we are to Leave the World," they are called "sons and daughters" in contrast to "Father."¹⁷² The expression "child/children of God" is recognized at least eighty eight times in his sermons of this period. The qualification as a member of a family is given when they are born. He identifies being born again as the moment of justification. In the sermon "The Repentance of Believers," he says, "at the very moment of justification we are 'born again': in that instant we experience that inward change from 'darkness into marvellous light'; from the image of the brute and the devil into the image of God, from the earthly, sensual, devilish mind, to the mind which was in Christ Jesus."¹⁷³ Just as a birth is an essential change in one's existence, so the experience to be a Christian is not only justification but also one which is called "born again," namely, an inward and essential change. In his sermons, this experience is described as "born from above," or "born of the Spirit/God," too.¹⁷⁴ At that moment, the Holy Spirit works in us. He is called "the Spirit of adoption." For instance, "All that are not only servants but children of God.

¹⁷² BE Works, vol. 3, 154.

¹⁷³ BE Works, vol. 1, 350.

¹⁷⁴ BE Works, vol. 2, 158.

All that have 'the Spirit of adoption, crying in their hearts, Abba, Father'."¹⁷⁵

Though those who are born of God are qualified to be members of a family, there are some stages of positions in a family. He uses the expression "babe in Christ" in contrast to an adult Christian.¹⁷⁶ The interpretation of the concept of "babe in Christ" should be noted here. The meaning of those who are "babes in Christ" is "those that have lately tasted of his love and are as yet weak and unestablished therein."¹⁷⁷ He also uses the term "carnal" in the same meaning as "babe in Christ."¹⁷⁸ "He is saved from sin; yet not entirely: it *remains*, though it does not *reign*."¹⁷⁹ He is holy and sanctified, though it is only partially.

This Father is a "loving Father/God." God Himself is love. Not only He is love, He does love us. As was mentioned earlier, this is the foundation of his theology, which underlies the other aspects of God.

King. The content of the statements about the role of God as King have just a few points. It seems that there is nothing especially compared with those in the second period. Accordingly, just the topics will be cited in the following.

First, the image of God as King is compared mainly to "glory." There are so many statements about it such as "glory of God," "glorify," "magnify," etc.. God

¹⁷⁵ BE Works, vol. 4, 49.

¹⁷⁶ BE Works, vol. 1, 327.

¹⁷⁷ BE Works, vol. 3, 103.

¹⁷⁸ BE Works, vol. 1, 321.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 327.

should be glorified.¹⁸⁰ Therefore, He should be worshipped.¹⁸¹

Secondly, He "sitteth upon his throne."¹⁸² The image "reign" is attached to this concept sometimes, though this image is used in order to show the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.¹⁸³

Thirdly, Some of God's attributes such as omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, and wisdom are discussed. The conspicuous one is God's wisdom. It seems that the specific contents can not be recognized in other attributes than the wisdom of God. The term "wisdom" appears at least twenty eight times. His wisdom is infinite and attached to the concept of power.¹⁸⁴

Lastly, the aspect of God as King is discussed in relation to the aspect of immanence. This aspect is described in the expression "kingdom of God." There are some similar expressions such as "kingdom of Christ," "kingdom of heaven," etc.. The concept "kingdom" has a few aspects. The meaning of "kingdom of God" is the area which God reigns. He cites the famous verse, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," some times.¹⁸⁵ "The kingdom of God" here can be regarded as the place where God has priority to anything. The expression "enter into the

¹⁸⁰ BE Works, vol. 2, 466.

¹⁸¹ BE Works, vol. 3, 319.

¹⁸² BE Works, vol. 2, 502.

¹⁸³ BE Works, vol. 3, 443.

¹⁸⁴ BE Works, vol. 2, 540.

¹⁸⁵ BE Works, vol. 3, 345.

kingdom of God" is also employed. It seems that this expression has two connotations: the place where Christians enter ultimately, namely, heaven, and the area where man can enter and taste when believing in Christ. This is also described as the place of the inside of man such as soul or heart.¹⁸⁶ It is interesting that the aspect of God as King is discussed in relation to the aspect of immanence of God. Though He is sovereign king who has an image of separation, He has also a connection with man which is described as "kingdom of God."

Creator. The fact that God is the Creator of all the creatures is mentioned repeatedly in his sermons. God is called "Creator" directly.¹⁸⁷ It is recognized at least one hundred times in his sermon of this period. There are also many descriptions that God created things. He created man.¹⁸⁸ He created souls.¹⁸⁹

What should be noted here besides these aspects is the expression "image of God." This expression has two aspects. The first one is that man was created after the image of God. The second one is that the image of God is restored or renewed by the new creation in Christ Jesus, or by the Spirit. In the sermon "God's Love to Fallen Man," he states, "There could have been no faith in the Spirit of God, as renewing the image of God in our hearts, as raising us from the death of sin unto the

¹⁸⁶ BE Works, vol. 4, 34.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 153.

¹⁸⁸ BE Works, vol. 2, 540.

¹⁸⁹ BE Works, vol. 3, 295.

life of righteousness."¹⁹⁰ It can be said that this is the main theme of Wesley's theology and soteriology. Although man was created after the image of God, the image of God in man was destroyed by sin. The recovery or restoration from this devastated situation is the focus in Wesley's concept. "Perfection" was a significant theme to him, and he shows how it is related to God's roles as Creator in the sermon "On Perfection."

Again. He writes to the Christians at Ephesus of 'putting on the new man, which is created after God in righteousness and true holiness'. And to the Colossians of 'the new man, renewed after the image of him that created him'; plainly referring to the words in Genesis: 'So God created man in his own image.' Now the moral image of God consists (as the Apostle observes) 'in righteousness and true holiness'. By sin this is totally destroyed. And we never can recover it till we are 'created anew in Christ Jesus'. And this is perfection.¹⁹¹

It should be noted that the inner work of God in man is also a focus, although God is the Creator who is transcendent.

Another aspect noticed here is the subcategory of God as Physician. The word "heal" as well as "physician" shows up several times. What is healed is "the sickness of their souls."¹⁹² Not only other roles of God, but also the role of God as Creator is discussed in the sense that God works in us. The great Physician does "restore their spiritual health."¹⁹³

Judge. While the role of God as righteous Judge was the third largest one in

¹⁹⁰ BE Works, vol. 2, 426.

¹⁹¹ BE Works, vol. 3, 75.

¹⁹² BE Works, vol. 2, 452.

¹⁹³ BE Works, vol. 4, 86.

the second period, it is the fifth in this period. It accounts for only approximately ten percent. The percent of the role of God as Judge in this period goes down compared with the second period, which accounts for approximately sixteen percent. The role of God as Judge, which is described as Governor in "Thoughts Upon God's Sovereignty," is the watershed between the Calvinistic view and the Wesleyan view, as was mentioned earlier.¹⁹⁴ It was a significant element that God was not only a sovereign King, but also a righteous Judge. In the sermons of this period, there is hardly anything new compared from the second period about the statements of the role of God as Judge. However, a brief recapitulation will be made in the following.

Like the materials in the second period, he used the term "righteous Judge" in his sermons. To Wesley, God was not only Creator and King, but also a righteous Judge. The important characteristic of righteous Judge is that He has both of "justice and mercy."¹⁹⁵ By this characteristic, He governs the whole universe. Therefore, He is called "Governor" as well.¹⁹⁶ In accordance with that characteristic, the righteous Judge requires us to meet the expectation of His righteousness. By way of the appearance of the expectation of His righteousness, He gives us the standard which should be kept by those whom He loves. This is the "law of God," which should not be changed even by tyrannical thoughts of God.¹⁹⁷ Once the

¹⁹⁴ Works, vol. 10, 362-363.

¹⁹⁵ BE Works, vol. 3, 607.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 431.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 372.

absolute standard is given, there will be a reasonable reward for each deed. When the standard is not kept, the "wrath of God" descends as the natural result.¹⁹⁸ Ultimately, the righteous judgment of God is given.¹⁹⁹ However, the divine righteousness of Christ is imputed to all believers.²⁰⁰ With regard to this, he employed two ideas: justification by faith, and forgiveness.²⁰¹ It can be said here that Wesley's concern was how God can have a relationship with man. The fact that God is a righteous Judge opened the door to man.

Redeemer. Like the second period, it seems that the concept that God is Redeemer is not so important as other roles such as Revealer, Father, Creator, King, and Judge. The percent of this phrase remains almost six throughout his life according to table 1. In terms of the aspect of God as Redeemer, the major difference hardly can be recognized between the periods of his life.

Since there are not many differences compared with the second period, the content of the items can be summarized in the same way into four concepts: save, power of God, redeem, and deliver or free. When the word "save" is used, it refers to the salvation from sin in most cases. For example, Wesley says, "he might do good to all, by saving them from the bondage of sin, and bringing them into the glorious

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 36.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 276.

²⁰⁰ BE Works, vol. 1, 453.

²⁰¹ BE Works, vol. 2, 520.

liberty of the children of God."²⁰² When he uses the term "redeem or redemption," it refers to the work of Jesus Christ. The expression, "redemption in the blood of Jesus," is used repeatedly, which appears fourteen times including similar expressions.²⁰³ Finally, through the redemption of Jesus Christ, "all who are justified do at that time find an absolute freedom from all sin."²⁰⁴

Priest. The percent of the role of God as Priest goes down as the period goes by. It accounts for just six percent approximately in this period. It seems that Wesley had not valued this aspect as other aspects such as Revealer, Father, and King.

There are a few verbs employed to indicate the work as Priest: sanctify, purify, cleanse, take away sin, etc.. There are not many differences among them in terms of connotation. However, when he uses the expression, "cleanse from," the various object are dealt with: all sin, all your filthiness of flesh and spirit, all our uncleannesses, indwelling sin, the corruption that is in the world, etc..²⁰⁵

The work of Priest is also dealt with in terms of the work of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the Mediator of the new covenant.²⁰⁶ There are some statements which

²⁰² BE Works, vol. 3, 608.

²⁰³ BE Works, vol. 1, 336.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 330.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 348.

²⁰⁶ BE Works, vol. 4, 196.

indicate that the atonement was made by Jesus Christ.²⁰⁷

Shepherd. As is mentioned earlier, the percent remains almost one through all periods. It seems that, though the content of this category is significant, the rather static image which this category has did not fit Wesley's dynamic understanding of his religion. Mainly two concepts can be picked up in this category: goodness of God, and Shepherd who takes care.²⁰⁸

Others. Like the second period, two roles are recognized: Helper and Giver. The expression "God's assistance" shows up repeatedly. With regard to the role of God as Giver, he mentions what He gives us. The items are "every good gift," talent, "life and death," "all spiritual life," etc..

Influences Considered

Historical Settings

What should be identified when analyzing doctrines is to know historical backgrounds, which seem to have an influence on the theological views at that time. Examining theologically, the differences between the Calvinism and the Wesleyanism become clear. However, a more interesting thing is to search the roots from which theological views are derived. It might enable us to know the exact theological implications that the theologians want us to understand and apply. In particular, it should be noted that the concept of God has been inevitably influenced by a historical setting in each time. For instance, this study indicates that there is a

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 175.

²⁰⁸ BE Works, vol. 2, 495.

difference between the Calvinism and the Wesleyanism in terms of the understanding of the concept of God. To examine where this difference about the roles of God comes from is one of the important points in order to comprehend theological connotation accurately. The political sphere in the Reformation era was not simple, but complicated. It cannot be explained in one word. The Reformers such as Luther, Calvin have their own points of view. Comparing a Protestant political thinking with the ideas of Erasmus and Machiavelli, Luther is associated with Machiavelli and the Anabaptists with Erasmus. Calvinism cannot fit this pattern.²⁰⁹ Furthermore, other elements, Catholicism or nationalism, etc., made the situation much more intricate.²¹⁰ However, as far as the concept of God is concerned, it seems that Maciavelli's concept of the Prince as an ideal ruler was underlying the political concepts of the people at that time.²¹¹ It influenced the concept of God in Reformation era so much. "No one questioned their divine right to exercise their authoritarian power, even when it appeared arbitrary or whimsical."²¹² Naturally the Reformers' concepts about roles of God tend to be God as Creator and King, who sits on a throne in heaven and governs the destiny of men on earth.

On the other hand, it is necessary to consider the historical background in eighteenth century in order to comprehend the roles of God in Wesleyan point of

²⁰⁹ Roland H. Bainton, The Reformation of the Sixteenth Century (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985), 232.

²¹⁰ Ibid., 230.

²¹¹ John Wesley in Theological Debate, 128.

²¹² Ibid..

view. It is said that Wesley was influenced by the political, social, and religious conditions of the age when he lived. The first thing is democracy. The absolutism became less trendy, while the idea of democracy was becoming dominant gradually. The movement toward democratic government resulted in some political phenomena such as the independent United States, the French Revolution, etc.. The idea of Parliament particularly in England also should be noticed. A Prime Minister and a Cabinet were in charge of the political authority. "No longer was the divine right of kings unquestionably accepted."²¹³ Also the constitutionalism of John Locke had been penetrating the thoughts of the people at that time.²¹⁴ "The greatest factor in moulding the general theory of the age was the work of Locke."²¹⁵ In the eighteenth century, God should be no more only a sovereign King, but also He had to be a righteous Judge, who reigns over man and society according right rules and regulations. Besides that, the influences of Locke cannot be denied in considering the political spheres and the mentality of the people. Especially by the beginning of the eighteenth century, reason prevailed and was regarded as the highest gift of God.²¹⁶ An interesting thing is that Locke, who stressed the necessity for Christianity to be reasonable, still believed in the necessity of special revelation through

²¹³ Ibid., 129.

²¹⁴ Ibid., 128.

²¹⁵ Alfred H. Body, John Wesley and Education (London: Epworth Press, 1936), 33.

²¹⁶ Robert G. Tuttle, Jr., John Wesley: His Life and Theology (Grand Rapids: Francis Asbury Press, 1978), 33.

the Bible for things which cannot be perceived by reason alone.²¹⁷ Deism was dominant and it challenged the doctrine of revelation and the incarnation of Christ and tried to establish a religion on the basis of a natural revelation and reason.²¹⁸ Considering that revealing is Locke's definition of faith as an assent of the mind, and belief in Jesus as the Messiah, it seems that the concept of revelation might have influenced Wesley's idea of the roles of God. Although there are some differences in terms of the concept of faith and reason and the relationship of each other, the thought that God reveals to man might inspire his thinking of the concept of God. The concept that God is a personal revealer can hardly be found in the Reformation.

Another interesting thing about the perception of Locke is that when Locke sought to replace the authority of God by authority of society, John Wesley does not follow that, because he recognizes still the authority of God and delegates it to parents directly.²¹⁹ It seems that Wesley's concept of the authority of parents was derived from the authority of God. The concept of the authority of God is in a sense connected with the authority in a family. Although Wesley did not always accepted the concept of Locke, it is true that his constitutionalism, the concept of revelation, and the perception of authority influenced Wesley's era in various ways. In other words, Wesley's concept of roles of God as Judge, Revealer, and Father could have been influenced by these factors in that century.

²¹⁷ Rack, 25.

²¹⁸ Onva K. Boshears, Jr., "John Wesley, The Bookman; A Study of His Reading Interests in the Eighteenth Century" (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1972), 83.

²¹⁹ Body, 34.

Wesley's Spiritual Experiences

Thinking the difference of the disposition about Wesley's understanding of the roles of God between each period, it is crucial and interesting to inquire into the important incidents and circumstances which surrounded him. According to the divisions made in the analyses of the roles of God, the main thing considered to be the important incident in his life is the experience at the Aldersgate street in 1738 and its interpretation, and the holiness revival movement in 1760s and the theological debates about the interpretation of those phenomena. Therefore, the meaning of these incidents to Wesley will be examined in terms of his spiritual experiences and the understanding of faith which might have influenced on his concept of God.

The incident at the Aldersgate street in 1738 and its interpretation will be explored first. The experience at the Aldersgate street had been regarded as the most crucial experience in the life of John Wesley. It is often called an "evangelical conversion." There is no doubt that something happened at Aldersgate on his spirituality, although there are various interpretations about it. It seems that the statement in the diary shows that the Aldersgate was an important incident to Wesley. Wesley mentions his experience in the entry on May 24, 1738.

In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate-Street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation: And an assurance was given me, that he had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death.²²⁰

²²⁰ Works, vol. 1, 103.

According to the entry on the day of Aldersgate, the issue was faith in Christ, "my" sins, salvation from the law of sin and death, and an assurance. It can be said that the thing he knew here was that justification was by faith and the assurance that we were saved was given when we really experienced it. Faith in Christ and the doctrine of assurance of faith were the issue which are derived from his reflection on Aldersgate. Then, the process to reach that experience will be described. Because the process is important in interpreting a personal Christian experience. It seems that justification by faith was one of the crucial theological issues to Wesley at that time. Before Aldersgate, he had been struggling with the issue of faith. The diary on May 24, 1738 indicates this.

In my return to England, January, 1738, being in imminent danger of death, and very uneasy on that account, I was strongly convinced that the cause of that uneasiness was unbelief; and that the gaining a true, living faith was the "one thing needful" for me. But still I fixed not this faith on its right object: I meant only faith in God, not faith in or through Christ. Again, I knew not that I was wholly void of this faith; but only thought, I had not enough of it. So that when Peter Böhler, whom God prepared for me as soon as I came to London, affirmed of true faith in Christ, (which is but one,) that it had those two fruits inseparably attending it, "Dominion over sin, and constant Peace from a sense of forgiveness," I was quite amazed, and looked upon it as a new Gospel. If this was so, it was clear I had not faith. But I was not willing to be convinced of this.²²¹

The diary shows that Wesley, who could not notice the importance of justification by faith alone for a long time, is struggling with this issue in order to get the true faith and peace based on faith. He frankly admits that he has no faith in him. His conclusion then was that this faith should be sought by abandoning to trust his own

²²¹ Ibid., 101-102.

work and his own righteousness, either wholly or partially, which he had been leaning on from his youth until then.²²² This was the condition shortly before the Aldersgate experience. Then he finally knew the true meaning of faith. The Aldersgate experience was the crucial point when Wesley, who had been seeking to leave the mystic faith, got the solution about the issue of justification by faith.²²³ The change was "loss of concern about his own salvation, and indeed about his own respectability."²²⁴ Wesley's struggle can be seen in the diary on March 4, 1738 when he had a conversation with Peter Böhler. He confesses,

Immediately it struck into my mind, "Leave off preaching. How can you preach to others, who have not faith yourself?" I asked Böhler, whether he thought I should leave it off or not. He answered, "By no means." I asked, "But what can I preach?" He said, "Preach faith *till* you have it; and then, *because* you have it, you *will* preach faith."²²⁵

Faith was the most essential problem to him. Through these processes, he gradually realized that they could get salvation in trusting in Jesus by faith.²²⁶ The Aldersgate experience changed Wesley's experiential understanding of faith.

Wesley's reflection on Aldersgate might be also related to the doctrine of assurance which is one of the important topics in Wesley's theological framework. It

²²² Fujimoto, 45-46.

²²³ Robert G. Tuttle, Jr., Mysticism in the Wesleyan Tradition (Grand Rapids: Francis Asbury Press, 1989), 133.

²²⁴ Frances Young, "The Significance of John Wesley's Conversion Experience," in John Wesley: Contemporary Perspective, ed. John Stacey (London: Epworth Press, 1988), 39.

²²⁵ Works, vol. 1, 86.

²²⁶ Fujimoto, 46.

seems that he came to a certain conclusion on the doctrine of assurance of faith. His perception of his faith is exceedingly individual. The Aldersgate experience might influence on his doctrine of assurance of faith to some extent, even though it was not the most determining one. It can be said this perspective was traditionally accepted, as is seen the quotation by Colin Williams. He quotes Yates's citation again in his book.

Our view is that 24th May 1738, was the first occasion on which John Wesley gained an assurance of personal salvation centered in a crucified Christ. His Aldersgate experience was the foundation on which John Wesley's doctrine of Assurance or Witness of the Spirit, was base.²²⁷

However, it also should be noted that, as Colin Williams points out, there are critiques against a "conversionist" view, so that the doctrine of assurance may originate with a former date than the Aldersgate experience. "Wesley was seeking for such an assurance long before."²²⁸ In other words, it "has been greatly exaggerated through the years as a decisive boundary between Wesley's life before and after that point (despite his post-Aldersgate Journal entries that defy such simplification)."²²⁹ The critics say the standard reading is an imposition of the nineteenth century "conversionist" ideology upon both the details of Wesley's biography and his theological understanding of the Christian life.²³⁰ They also use Wesley's comments

²²⁷ Williams, 102-103.

²²⁸ Ibid., 103.

²²⁹ Weems, 36.

²³⁰ Theodore H. Runyon, "The Importance of Experience for Faith," in Aldersgate Reconsidered, ed. Randy L. Maddox (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1990), 93.

to argue. They say that before 1738 Wesley claimed to be a Christian, that he also claimed after 1738 he was not a true believer and at least in one instance implied that he never had been. They deny "the watershed concept and see several important developments occurring in Wesley's life and thought."²³¹

However, it can be said that the experience at Aldersgate was a pivotal point where he experienced an assurance of faith. As Heitzenrater points out, "[i]t is clear that in 1738 he defined that experience of the witness of the Spirit as his conversion because he then accepted the Moravian theological framework for anticipating and explaining such instantaneous experiences."²³² Aldersgate was significant in terms of an instantaneous experience and the understanding of the assurance of faith. In conclusion, it is inferred that the understanding of faith and the doctrine of assurance of faith had influenced to some extent his Christian life and his theological framework such as the doctrine of God. In particular, the aspect that he is able to be saved not by man's endeavour, but by God's grace and man's faith influenced the concept of roles of God, considering that in the second period the aspect of the roles as Revealer and Father is strongly emphasized. It is also inferred that when Wesley discarded his own endeavour to try to have himself accepted by God at Aldersgate, God's love which accepts man without any man's merit became one of his main theological themes in the following period.

²³¹ Richard P. Heitzenrater, "Great Expectations: Aldersgate and the Evidences of Genuine Christianity," in Aldersgate Reconsidered, ed. Randy L. Maddox (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1990), 49–50.

²³² *Ibid.*, 91.

Another meaningful experience for Wesley is his confrontation with the spiritual development of the Methodist revival. It is not easy to identify Wesley's another decisive spiritual experience which might be called entire sanctification. It is appropriate to focus on the Methodism and Perfectionism in the 1760s as the incident by which Wesley was forced to think of Christian perfection. Accordingly, the holiness revival movement and its interpretations will be discussed next. It might be difficult to determine what happened in Wesley's mind and spirituality around this time, for there is nothing instantaneous such as the Aldersgate experience. However, if there is anything recognized as the elements which possibly influenced on his concept of God, that should be noted.

A crucial theological topic in the holiness revival movement is Christian perfection and entire sanctification. Sanctification which should be demonstrated in heart and life was not a new topic for the holiness revival in the 1760s, but since the opening of the Holy Club, Wesley maintained it. However, the debating issue was if sanctification could be gained by ordinary people, and he did not always feel that it was an easy goal which could be reached by everyone.²³³ "Wesley had not taught until the 1760s that perfection could be obtained as an instantaneous gift by faith: probably because it was only then that he found numerous cases of it happening in this way."²³⁴ As a matter of fact, he was skeptical of the testimony of those who experienced entire sanctification, for he needed to discern the difference between the

²³³ Fujimoto, 71.

²³⁴ Rack, 335.

perfection and the enthusiasm at that time. It is hard to identify the date when the revival movement broke out. However, the early 1760s was its climactic point.²³⁵ Through these processes, he could not help theologizing on Christian perfection and its possibility on earth. They debated this topic at annual conferences often times. For example, "[the] Conference of 1759 discussed the matter," and he gave out his Thought on Christian Perfection, emphasizing "perfection as pure love to God and neighbour and clarified the co-existence of it with 'infirmities' by carefully defining the sin from which perfection freed people as being the 'voluntary transgression of a known law'."²³⁶ Finally as a review of his teaching since 1725, he produced Plain Account of Christian Perfection in 1766. His struggle with the issue is exposed in that book in order. This book was the vast experiential data which was collected theologically through the revival movement, and Wesley's doctrine of entire sanctification became unshakable, which implies that entire sanctification is the instantaneous work of the Holy Spirit which can be obtained now by faith, and it can be experienced consciously.²³⁷

The manifestation which was presented in the Plain Account of Christian Perfection was published as the compilation of his doctrine of Christian perfection. He explains the purpose.

What I purpose in the following papers is, to give a plain and distinct account of the steps by which I was led, during a course of many years, to embrace the

²³⁵ Fujimoto, 72-73.

²³⁶ Rack, 336.

²³⁷ Fujimoto, 76.

doctrine of Christian perfection.²³⁸

Its content is the key to indicate Wesley's mind at that time. After this statement, he proceeds to mention the spiritual influence of Bishop Taylor, Kempis, and Law, the sermon "The Circumcision of the Heart" in 1733, etc., which he had in his spiritual journey, trying to demonstrate that there was no logical and theological contradiction in his own understanding of Christian perfection.²³⁹ The inner experience which can be obtained by the work of the Holy Spirit, God as Revealer, had been becoming the focal point in Wesley's mind around this time. The underlying concept of Christian perfection is love. Wesley answers the question, "What is Christian perfection?" in section 19.

The loving God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength. This implies, that no wrong temper, none contrary to love, remains in the soul; and that all the thoughts, words, and actions, are governed by pure love.²⁴⁰

The last part of section 18 shows the summary of the doctrine of Christian perfection as well.

(1.) That Christian perfection is that love of God and our neighbour, which implies deliverance from all sin. (2.) That this is received merely by faith. (3.) That it is given instantaneously, in one moment. (4.) That we are to expect it, not at death, but every moment; that now is the accepted time, now is the day of this salvation.²⁴¹

Love of God and our neighbour was becoming the focal point especially in Wesley's

²³⁸ Works, vol. 11, 366.

²³⁹ Fujimoto, 76.

²⁴⁰ Works, vol. 11, 394.

²⁴¹ Ibid., 393.

mind. Thus, it is also inferred that the doctrine which was compiled in Plain Account of Christian Perfection influenced his theological framework in the following period of his life, especially concerning the concept of God as well.

Concisely, the theme in these spiritual processes will be abstracted as the doctrine of justification by faith, the possibility of assurance of faith, which is shown especially at the Aldersgate experience, and the inner work of the Holy Spirit which is called entire sanctification or Christian perfection, and perfection of love, which was proved theologically in the holiness movement in the 1760s. It is assumed that these aspects were influenced by his concept of God, especially the roles of God as a loving Father and a Revealer.

Synthesis

Wesley's Concept of God

As was mentioned in section A, "Prevalent Analysis of Roles of God," the roles of God are described as a Creator and as a Governor, in the direct summary of John Wesley's understanding of the roles of God in "Thoughts upon God's Sovereignty."²⁴² This concept is followed by some theologians who try to analyze Wesley's doctrine of God. Wesley also believed that these two aspects are compatible each other, while they are different. Though Wesley just used the expression, "a Creator and a Governor," the immanence aspect rather than the transcendence aspect is

²⁴² Works, vol. 10, 361.

stressed in his concept of God.²⁴³

However, it is evident that Wesley's concept of God has various aspects after exploring the descriptions of roles of God in his sermons. It is inferred that the concept of the two-fold character of God is rather the simplified one, because of the theological background. For a Governor aspect needed to be emphasized in order to identify the distinction of his concept with Calvinistic view. Wesley's concept of God cannot be demonstrated only as a contrast, but also as a well-balanced and sophisticated one.

This perspective can be identified in the analysis of the roles of God in his sermons. The analysis indicates that Wesley's God has mainly five facets: Revealer, Father, King, Judge, and Creator. These five facets are totally different each other in terms of the roles of God, while they are overlapped together to some extent in terms of the underlying concept of God, which is love.

Some influences considered will be pointed out. The historical setting at that time made him focus on rather a righteous judge and a loving father facets than a creator and a tyrant king. His own spiritual experience did influence on his concept of God in terms of a revealer and a loving Father.

The abridgement of roles of God will be made in the following.

Revealer is the one which occurs most. Wesley believed that "God is never absent from the world which he has made and that his hand sustains its process and

²⁴³ Kenneth J. Collins, A Faithful Witness: John Wesley's Homiletical Theology (Wilmore: Wesley Heritage Press, 1993), 20.

his power is always available for the needs of his creatures."²⁴⁴ A deep relationship of God with man is described by using the verb "dwell." One of the most remarkable works of the Holy Spirit is to bear witness that they are children of God. The Aldersgate experience gave Wesley a certain conclusion about the doctrine of assurance of faith. After going through the holiness revival movement, this doctrine developed, showing the two phases: direct testimony and indirect one.²⁴⁵ As the means of revealing, two things are presented: Scripture and Jesus Christ. Wesley thought that Christ alone was the Revealer of both love and law.²⁴⁶ An important thing is that the work of Revealer is strongly related with that of Father. Revealer's purpose is to bear witness that they are children of God, which means God is a loving Father.

The role of God as Father is also inevitable in Wesley's concept of God. "Wesley understood God in terms of a loving father who sustained a relationship with His children after the analogy of a family."²⁴⁷ The basic concept is love. Christian perfection is defined as the love of God which results in the love of others.²⁴⁸ In

²⁴⁴ Cannon, 169.

²⁴⁵ Rob L. Staples, "John Wesley's Doctrine of the Holy Spirit," Wesleyan Theological Journal 21 (Spring-Fall 1986): 102.

²⁴⁶ Deschner, 193.

²⁴⁷ Burgess, 34.

²⁴⁸ W. Stanley Johnson, "Christian Perfection as Love for God," Wesleyan Theological Journal 18 (Spring 1983): 57.

Christian experience the "infinite Love was realized as that of a father to his child."²⁴⁹ Therefore, Wesley regarded "the new birth as an entry point, not only to a right relationship with God, but into the warm fellowship of the family of God."²⁵⁰

Though the aspect of immanence such as Revealer and Father is dominant, the aspect of separation is not denied in Wesley's concept. One of the remarkable attributes of a Sovereign King is wisdom. The important thing here is the attribute of wisdom is used together with other attributes of God such as justice, power, and mercy. These elements do not have any conflict, nor are inconsistent each other. This is the feature of Wesley's concept of God. Another important thing is that the idea of "kingdom of God" is emphasized. The role of God as King is discussed in relation to the immanence of God.

Another feature of Wesley's God is the role of God as Judge, which is called a Governor in Wesley's direct statement.²⁵¹ God's attribute as Judge is righteousness. He gives the standard to be observed by man. Once the standard is presented, a reward and a punishment will be given according to His righteousness. However, it should be noted that this attribute has to be discussed with other attributes such as mercy or truth. In particular, the concept of love is underlying even this role of

²⁴⁹ George Eayrs, John Wesley: Christian Philosopher and Church Founder (London: Epworth Press, 1926), 141.

²⁵⁰ Burgess, 35.

²⁵¹ Works, vol. 10, 361.

God. Accordingly, it makes man's full obedience to God possible.²⁵² It means that man might come to "the conviction that God is intrinsically obligated to do what is right and that this inherent righteousness is pervaded by eternal love."²⁵³ The concept "wrath of God" is also one of the characteristics with regard to Judge. Even this concept is discussed in the context of love, since the perception of wrath of God is used together with the concept of a conviction of sin in his sermons.

The role of God as Creator is summarized into two aspects. The first one is that man is created after the "image of God." The second one is the possibility of the recovery of the image of God corrupted by sin. Although the role of God as Creator indicates the transcendence of God, this aspect is also discussed in the context of the immanence of God in a sense. It can be said that the possibility of the recovery of the image of God is the main theme of Wesley's theology.

The principle which should be noted especially is the holiness which is essential to God. The assumption that God is holy was the foundation of Wesley's doctrine of God. The assumption that man must be holy because He is holy was the foundation of Wesley's doctrine of salvation. In his sermons, the concept of holiness is connected to other attributes of God in various ways. He state,

The second thing which we may here understand by 'light' is holiness. While thou seekest God in all things thou shalt find him in all, the fountain of all holiness, continually filling thee with his own likeness, with justice, mercy, and

²⁵² BE Works, vol. 1, 427.

²⁵³ Charles Randall Wilson, "The Correlation of Love and Law in the Theology of John Wesley" (Ph.D. diss., Graduate School of Vanderbilt University, 1959), 122.

truth.²⁵⁴

God's holiness needs to be discussed in relation to other attributes such as justice, mercy, or truth, for the concept of holiness is underlying other aspects of God. Especially two essential aspects of God, Creator and the recovery of the image of God, and Father and love, will be discussed. First, with regard to the role of God as Creator, holiness is argued in relation to "a recovery of the image of God, a renewal of soul after his likeness; and godly sincerity, directing all my words and works so as to conduce to his glory."²⁵⁵ Secondly, with regard to the role of God as a loving Father, he states in his sermon "The Witness of the Spirit, I,"

But we must love God before we can be holy at all; this being the root of all holiness. Now we cannot love God till we know he loves us: 'We love him, because he first loved us.' And we cannot know his pardoning love to us till his Spirit witnesses it to our spirit.²⁵⁶

The concept of love is practically related to that of holiness.²⁵⁷ The concept of God's holiness is often used together with other aspects in his sermons. This will be the key in thinking of the roles of God in Wesley's mind.

Figure 1 is the summary of the five roles of God. The concept of God's holiness is the foundation of the whole God's picture.

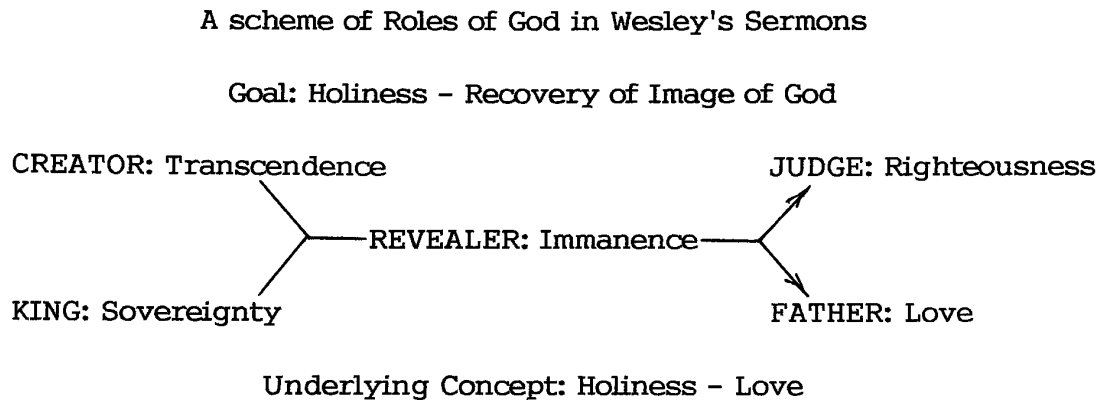
²⁵⁴ BE Works, vol. 1, 614.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 310.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 274.

²⁵⁷ Albert C. Outler, "A Focus on the Holy Spirit: Spirit and Spirituality in John Wesley," Quarterly Review: A Scholarly Journal for Reflection on Ministry 8 (Summer 1988): 13.

Figure 1



The balance in Wesley's concept which is presented here can be discussed in two ways. First, it is the balance of the transcendence and immanence of God. Wesley's concept is neither deistic nor pantheistic but the warm, well-balanced theism.²⁵⁸ In other words, he tried to tie together the ideas of God's providence and His sovereignty in relation to human affairs.²⁵⁹ Secondly, it is the balance of love and law which originates God's attributes, and both of them are necessary and available through God's redemptive works. These two aspects are separate and distinct. He did not think one might be derived from the other. Yet the origin was derived from God. Both of "God's redeeming love and His disciplining law" are necessary and available for salvation.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁸ George Croft Cell, The Rediscovery of John Wesley (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1935), 282.

²⁵⁹ Joseph William Seaborn, Jr., "Wesley's Views on the Uses of History," Wesleyan Theological Journal 21 (Spring-Fall 1986): 131.

²⁶⁰ Charles R. Wilson, "The Relevance of John Wesley's Distinctive Correlation of Love and Law," Wesleyan Theological Journal 12 (Spring 1977): 58.

These two balances, the balance of the transcendence and immanence of God, and the balance of God's love and law, are the features of Wesley's concept of God. They underlies the other aspects of his theology as well. Especially, with regard to the roles of God, the concept which underlies all the aspects is love, and the goal of his soteriology is the recovery of the image of God. It should be also noted that God's love in the Wesleyan context includes every other aspect such as God's sovereignty, righteousness, truth, power, purity, goodness, etc.. These concepts can be summarized into one concept "God's holiness."

Concept of God in Wesleyan Theology

As was mentioned earlier, Wesley's concept of God cannot be demonstrated only as a contrast, but also as a well-balanced and sophisticated one. Two balances, the balance of the transcendence and immanence of God, and the balance of God's love and law, are the features of Wesley's concept of God. With regard to the roles of God, the concept which underlies all the aspects is love, and the goal of his soteriology is the recovery of the image of God. Before making the implications of the roles of God into theological phases, the concept of God in the Wesleyan perspectives will be abridged, in order to discuss the distinctives of the Wesleyan theology.

It is rare to find that systematic theologians analyze the concept of God from the perspective of the roles of God. First, Wiley states about the moral attributes. "All the perfections of God as manifested in His moral government may be resolved

into two – His holiness and His love."²⁶¹ He deals with God's holiness "as a nature, of which the attributes are the expression."²⁶² Accordingly, he discusses God's love in relation to God's holiness.²⁶³ He also argues that the justice and righteousness as transitive holiness, and "the treatment of His creatures always conforms to the purity or holiness of His nature."²⁶⁴ Truth is also related to God's holiness. He says, "[this] perfection, like justice or righteousness, is closely related to holiness."²⁶⁵ God's attribute of grace or mercy is discussed with God's love. He regards it as transitive love. Wiley discusses, in conclusion, the importance of their harmony and proportion.²⁶⁶

The Christian understanding of God is discussed by Albert Truesdale from the perspectives such as a living God, God is holy, God is love, and other attributes including sovereignty, omnipotence, eternity, immutability, omnipresence, omniscience, and wrath.²⁶⁷ He states about God's holiness,

The whole of the Old and New Testaments is the revelation of the God who *is*

²⁶¹ Orton H. Wiley, Christian Theology, 3 vols. (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1965), 1:366.

²⁶² Ibid., 367.

²⁶³ Ibid., 378.

²⁶⁴ Ibid., 387.

²⁶⁵ Ibid., 389.

²⁶⁶ Ibid., 392.

²⁶⁷ Albert Truesdale, "Theism: The Eternal, Personal, Creative God," in A Contemporary Wesleyan Theology: Biblical, Systematic, and Practical, 3 vols, ed. Charles W. Carter (Grand Rapids: Francis Asbury Press, 1983), 1:111-127.

holiness and love. Together holiness and love constitute the essential being of God. They are not attributes of God, but His essence, on which such concepts as omniscience and omnipotence are predicated. The meaning of God's holiness is completed in the meaning of His love, and the meaning of His love is completed in his holiness. Unless these two are kept in balance, God's holiness may be distorted into a harsh, threatening transcendence, and His love may dissipate into aimless sentimentality. God's revelation of Himself is the revelation of His holiness and love. Therefore, every affirmation about Him should be an affirmation about His holiness and love.²⁶⁸

The correlation of God's holiness and love is discussed definitely. Not only a correlation, but also a balance between them is a crucial point. With regard to God's love, he asserts, "God's love must be understood as the power of His being, His sovereignty, His freedom."²⁶⁹ The statement about God's sovereignty should be noted. He says,

God's sovereignty means that He is absolutely free from creaturely restraints; that is, He is free to be who He is, the God who is holiness and love. [...] He is Lord above all. But we must keep in mind that His freedom is always an expression of who He is; His sovereignty is the power of holiness and love, expressed not oppressively or repressively, but in a most magnificent array of creating, saving, forgiving, and merciful deeds.²⁷⁰

Sovereignty is one of the critical issues which separate Wesleyanism from Calvinism. After this phrase, the author quotes Wesley's statement, "the sovereignty of God [must] never be brought to supersede His justice," to demonstrate the gravity of understanding of God's sovereignty.²⁷¹

Dunning argues the wrath of God in relation to God's love. He identifies the

²⁶⁸ Ibid., 116.

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 122.

²⁷⁰ Ibid., 122-123.

²⁷¹ Ibid., 123.

meaning of the wrath of God in accordance with Luther. He regards it as "our experience of God's love in a state of disobedience."²⁷² He also says, "even the central declaration of Christian faith about God must be qualified as 'holy love.'"²⁷³

In conclusion, it can be said these theologians' perspectives are generally in line with Wesley's theological framework, in the sense that the moral attributes of God are discussed along with Wesley's concept of God. Harmony and balance are valued by all these three theologians. Love is the key concept through all other attributes. There are few which discuss the Wesleyan theology from the perspective of the roles of God, especially from the viewpoint of God as Father. However, as far as the whole picture of the doctrine of God is concerned, Wesleyan concept of God can be regarded as in line with Wesley's concept of God. Compared with Wesley's concept that the focus is mainly on God as Revealer and Father, the Wesleyanism today has been modified more systematically. In other words, the Wesleyanism today is derived from Wesley's concept of God, and conversely, Wesley's concept of God can be regarded as "Wesleyanism." Accordingly, it can be said that when Wesley's concept of God is discussed, the concept of God in the Wesleyanism is discussed virtually.

²⁷² Ray H. Dunning, Grace, Faith, and Holiness: A Wesleyan Systematic Theology (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1988), 192.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*, 194.

CHAPTER 3

Theological Implications of Roles of God

Underlying Concept

Based on the analysis which was made in the preceding sections, the Wesleyan position will be abridged into a few points. As was mentioned earlier in the analysis of the Wesleyan concept of God, two balances, the balance of the transcendence and immanence of God, and the balance of God's love and law, are the features of Wesley's concept of God. The underlying concept in the roles of God is the love which is based on His holiness, and the goal is the recovery of the image of God which means to be holy as He is holy. With regard to the roles of God in his sermons, five aspects should be focused principally: a transcendent Creator, a sovereign King, an immanent Revealer, a righteous Judge, and a loving Father. As a matter of fact, these five roles should be taken into consideration in inquiring into the feature of the Wesleyanism. The balances also have to be kept.

In order to explore one feature of Wesleyanism, however, this study will limit itself particularly to the characteristics of Wesley's concept of God. As to the Wesleyan distinctives of roles of God, a Father aspect can be focused on while keeping the others in balance. Thus, the following observations will be made according to the view that God is a loving Father, that the underlying concept is holy love, and that the goal is the recovery of the image of God.

Controversies with Calvinistic View

Background

The evangelical theological environment at that time was Calvinism. Many of the religious people in the eighteenth century England were Calvinists. Most of the population was not religious, whereas "the Church of England was more concerned with moral than theological ideals."²⁷⁴ In discussing Calvinism in the theological issues, the kind of Calvinism has to be identified in order to get proper theological implications. Theologically, the Hyper-Calvinism, the High Calvinism, and the Moderate Calvinism are the major three categories in the Calvinism.²⁷⁵ It seems that the Calvinism which Wesley faced and refuted was not always the same as Calvin declared. The High Calvinism, which Theodore Beza and the Synod of Dort proclaimed, is a more developed form of Calvin's doctrine. All High Calvinists in England at that time were "Five-Point Calvinists."²⁷⁶ The Hyper-Calvinism has a more extreme logical position. Most of them in the eighteenth century were Baptists.²⁷⁷ The Moderate Calvinists thought "many Calvinists had gone beyond Scripture on positions like predestinated reprobation and supralapsarianism."²⁷⁸ They did not preach "on the doctrines of predestination, election, and final perseverance," but rather "on justification by faith alone, holiness, and assurance."²⁷⁹

²⁷⁴ J. Ernest Rattenbury, Wesley's Legacy to the World: Six Studies in the Permanent Values of the Evangelical Revival (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1929), 93.

²⁷⁵ John Wesley in Theological Debate, 37.

²⁷⁶ Ibid..

²⁷⁷ Ibid., 38.

²⁷⁸ Ibid., 39.

²⁷⁹ Ibid., 39-40.

George Whitefield is included in this category. He declares that "God's grace is given to all men to hinder their sinning, but redemptively only to the elect."²⁸⁰ Though he was classified in Moderate Calvinist, Whitefield "temporarily aligned himself more closely with the High Calvinist position."²⁸¹ Therefore, it is the High Calvinism that Wesley fought against concerning the doctrine of predestination.

When Wesley was opposed to Calvinism, his logical mind, connected with his experience of God's love, made him hostile to the doctrine of predestination. Wesley's personal discovery of God's amazing love was underlying the foundation of his theological debate.²⁸² Wesley's argument will be summarized into four points. First, the "absolute predestination makes preaching vain, *i.e.*, makes void the ordinance of God." Secondly, it "tends to destroy holiness." Thirdly, it "tended to destroy the comfort and happiness of Christianity." Fourthly, it "tended to destroy zeal for good works in the sense that it lessened our love, which produces good works."²⁸³ The foundation of Wesley's argument about the doctrine of predestination was laid on the assumption that no Scripture can prove it.²⁸⁴ Yet, his thought was that Scripture "must be interpreted by the central fact of his experience - the love of God which he

²⁸⁰ Irwin W. Reist, "John Wesley and George Whitefield: A Study in the Integrity of Two Theologies of Grace," The Evangelical Quarterly 47 (January-March, 1975): 34.

²⁸¹ John Wesley in Theological Debate, 40.

²⁸² Rattenbury, 93-94.

²⁸³ Reist, 35-36.

²⁸⁴ Rattenbury, 94.

knew to be true, for he had discovered it for himself."²⁸⁵ It might be true that there is the correlation of the doctrine of God including God's roles and God's attributes with the controversial issues in the Calvinism at that time. The analysis about it will be made briefly in the following.

Sovereignty

His principal concept of God's sovereignty is that His sovereignty must not be brought to supersede His justice. He states in "Predestination Calmly Considered," "[t]he sovereignty of God is then never to be brought to supersede his justice."²⁸⁶ Though he approved of God's sovereignty adequately, he insisted not only on God's justice but also on the balance of each attribute of God. He says "it is clear, that not sovereignty alone, but justice, mercy, and truth hold the reins."²⁸⁷ After he says that this attribute of God must not be separated from the rest, he explains the difference between the Calvinistic view and his concept with regard to God's sovereignty. He states,

For the Scripture nowhere speaks of this single attribute, as separate from the rest. Much less does it anywhere speak of the sovereignty of God as singly disposing eternal states of man. No, no; in this awful work, God proceeds according to the known rules of his justice and mercy; but never assigns his sovereignty as the cause why any man is punished with everlasting destruction.²⁸⁸

This statement shows Wesley's understanding of God's roles and attributes.

²⁸⁵ Ibid..

²⁸⁶ Works, vol. 10, 221.

²⁸⁷ Ibid., 235.

²⁸⁸ Ibid., 220.

Especially two important points should be noted here. First, he stresses the importance of the balance of God's attributes. However, it can be said that not only the importance of the balance, but also the concept underlying God's sovereignty is emphasized, which is God's justice and mercy. Though he uses the term "mercy" here, it also can be interpreted as the "love" concept according to the scheme shown in figure 1. In other words, "justice and mercy" can be replaced into "righteousness and love." Thus, the "love" concept is underlying God's sovereignty as well. Losing the balance of God's attributes and especially the underlying concept which is love results in the Calvinistic misunderstanding of God's sovereignty.

Eternal Decree

The understanding of this issue is a watershed between the Calvinism and the Wesleyanism. Against the concept of the Calvinistic predestination, his understanding of God's eternal decree is expressed in the following statement. He maintains in "Predestination Calmly Considered,"

I believe the eternal decree concerning both is expressed in those words: "He that believeth shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned." And this decree, without doubt, God will not change, and man cannot resist.²⁸⁹

God's decree is unchangeable and man cannot resist in the sense that man's belief is regarded by God as the crucial key between salvation and damnation. However, he mentions God's attributes after explaining the unchangeableness of God with regard to his decree. He states,

The Scripture teaches, (2.) That God is unchangeable with regard to his love

²⁸⁹ Ibid., 210.

and hatred. But how? Observe this well; for it is your grand mistake, and the root of almost all the rest. God unchangeably loveth righteousness, and hateth iniquity. Unchangeably he loveth faith, and unchangeably hateth unbelief. [...] So that the scripture account of God's unchangeableness with regard to his decrees, is this: He has unchangeably decreed to save holy believers, and to condemn obstinate, impenitent unbelievers.²⁹⁰

Even though there is no apparent assertion as to how God's love influences His decree, it is clear that God's love is related to holiness and righteousness. The justice aspect which is expressed in two ways, love and hatred, is underlying the concept of eternal decree. This concept of justice is deeply related to the concept of God's holy love in the sense that the eternal destiny of salvation and damnation does not depend on God's decree, but on man's choice of believing. It implies that in spite of the fact that God is a sovereign King who has authority over everything, He is never a tyrannical One who does anything according His whimsical will; rather He is a righteous Judge and a loving Father who treats man with unchangeable consistency and has a relationship with man as a father treats his child. He is a Father who treats man as a personality and gives His children the chance of choice about their eternal destiny. Accordingly, Wesley's distinctive understanding of the doctrine of God influences the understanding of God's decree.

Election and Reprobation

According to Wesley, two kinds of understanding are deduced from the Scriptural concept with regard to election: "a divine appointment of some particular men, to do some particular work in the world," and "a divine appointment of some men

²⁹⁰ Ibid., 238.

to eternal happiness."²⁹¹ Though particular work in the world is decided by God's election, eternal happiness is not. To separate one from the other is important to Wesley in order to avoid the confusion about the issue of election.

Based on this principle, the concept love is the key issue. He states,

So ill do election and reprobation agree with the truth and sincerity of God! But do they not agree least of all with the scriptural account of his love and goodness? that attribute which God peculiarly claims, wherein he glories above all the rest. It is not written, "God is justice," or "God is truth:" (Although he is just and true in all his ways:) But it is written, "God is love," love in the abstract, without bounds; and "there is no end of his goodness." His love extends even to those who neither love nor fear him. He is good, even to the evil and the unthankful; yea, without any exception or limitation, to all the children of men. For "the Lord is loving" (or good) "to every man, and his mercy is over all his works." But how is God good or loving to a reprobate, or one that is not elected?²⁹²

It is clear from this statement that Wesley thought the issue of election and reprobation should be discussed in the context of love. His arguing point of the criticism against Calvinistic election and reprobation is the idea that God is love. To Wesley unconditional election was incompatible with God's love. Accordingly, his understanding of election and reprobation is deeply related to his concept of God and affected by it.

Another argument of the election issue is developed about the understanding of man. Wesley's view was that when dealing with a man as a person, not a machine, the sound idea of election will be attained. He says,

Now, if man be capable of choosing good or evil, then he is a proper object of

²⁹¹ Ibid., 210.

²⁹² Ibid., 227.

the justice of God, acquitting of condemning, rewarding or punishing. But otherwise he is not. A mere machine is not capable of being either acquitted or condemned. Justice cannot punish a stone for falling to the ground; nor, on your scheme, a man for falling into sin.²⁹³

What is important in this statement is that God's justice is logically argued in relation to a man's function. God's justice, which means that He treats man with unchangeable consistency, cannot punish a man if he is not capable of choosing good or evil. It was Wesley's important arguing point that man is not a machine who should be treated without taking his personality into consideration, but an existence who has personality and is created after the image of God. So an understanding of God's attribute of justice is an underlying concept of his view of election.

Summary

Wesley, who criticized the High Calvinism of his time, introduced his distinctive concept of God into the argumentation over predestination with Calvinists. In particular, Wesley's distinctiveness of the concept of God is shown in God's sovereignty, God's eternal decree, and God's election. The concept underlying God's sovereignty is God's justice and mercy. The attributes "justice and mercy" can be translated into "righteousness and love." Thus, the "love" component is underlying God's sovereignty as well. The justice aspect, which is related to the concept of God's holy love, is underlying the concept of the eternal decree, in the sense that the eternity of salvation and damnation does not depend on God's decree, but on man's choice of believing. He is a righteous Judge and a loving Father who treats man as

²⁹³ Ibid., 233.

a personality and gives His children the opportunity of choice about their eternity. Unconditional election was incompatible with God's love, and unconditional election makes man a mere machine. Accordingly, the concept of predestination should be based on all God's attributes, especially on His love and His justice. Thus, Wesley's concept of God influenced his understanding of the Calvinistic views and the debate with the Calvinists at that time.

Order of Salvation

Wesley's Understanding of Salvation

To Wesley, the salvation was not discussed in only one phase, but it had various phases. It was the continuous process to transform life, though it contains some instantaneous crises. The "grace of God, as the redeeming activity of divine love, is the center of Wesley's theology."²⁹⁴ His conviction is that "God's gracious love is the dominant reality in human life."²⁹⁵ He presented his theology through the *ordo salutis*. He gives a brief outline in his sermon, "On Working Out Your Own Salvation."

'Your *own salvation*' -- salvation begins with what is usually termed (and very properly) 'preventing grace'; including the first wish to please God, the first dawn of light concerning his will, and the first slight, transient conviction of having sinned against him. All these imply some tendency toward life, some degree of salvation, the beginning of a deliverance from a blind, unfeeling heart, quite insensible of God and the things of God. Salvation is carried on by 'convincing grace', usually in Scripture termed 'repentance', which brings a larger measure of self-knowledge, and a farther deliverance from the heart

²⁹⁴ Thomas A. Langford, Practical Divinity: Theology in the Wesleyan Tradition (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1983), 24.

²⁹⁵ Ibid..

of stone. Afterwards we experience the proper Christian salvation, whereby 'through grace' we 'are saved by faith', consisting of those two grand branches, justification and sanctification. By justification we are saved from the guilt of sin, and restored to the favour of God: by sanctification we are saved from the power and root of sin, and restored to the image of God. All experience, as well as Scripture, shows this salvation to be both instantaneous and gradual. It begins the moment we are justified, in the holy, humble, gentle, patient love of God and man. It gradually increases from that moment, as a 'grain of mustard seed, which at first is the least of all seeds, but' gradually 'puts forth large branches', and becomes a great tree; till in another instant the heart is cleansed from all sin, and filled with pure love to God and man. But even that love increases more and more, till we 'grow up in all things into him that is our head', 'till we attain the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ'.²⁹⁶

This is Wesley's thought of the process of the salvation. The important thing is that "Christian love is a factor both in the objective events of atonement and justification and in the subjective transformation of new birth and subsequent sanctification."²⁹⁷ It can be said that through the whole process, Christian love is underlying as a principle factor in his theology. Especially Justification, Christian perfection, and Christian growth will be discussed in the following in relation to the doctrine of God, and in relation to God's love which is the important attribute of God as Father.

Justification and New Birth

In the initial sanctification which is also categorized as justification, new birth, etc., love is the key concept. With regard to the correlation of faith with love, "faith is only the means, the end is love."²⁹⁸ Love is regarded as a "direct fruit of

²⁹⁶ BE Works, vol. 3, 203-204.

²⁹⁷ Lindström, 161.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 173.

justifying faith."²⁹⁹ Yet, the most remarkable feature in the understanding of initial sanctification in Wesley is the father-child relationship which starts at that point and is kept continuously between God and man. The expression, "Spirit of adoption," is repeatedly used in his sermons.³⁰⁰ Wesley states in "A Plain Account of Christian Perfection," explaining the instantaneous aspect of Christian experience and gradual aspect of it.

There is, indeed, an instantaneous, as well as a gradual work of God in His children; and there wants not, we know, a cloud of witnesses, who have received, in one moments either a clear sense of the forgiveness of their sins, or the abiding witness of the Holy Spirit.³⁰¹

In Wesley, justification is understood as the starting point of a father-child relationship, which is called new birth theologically. Faith begins when God accepts and adopts the believer into the family of God. A new believer becomes a babe in Christ.³⁰² The Father concept plays a great role in his idea of initial sanctification.

One of Wesley's favorite expressions was "love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit," as was mentioned earlier. It shows that the initial sanctification or new birth is deeply related to God's love shed abroad by the Holy Spirit. "Through this Spirit man looks up to God as his forgiving and loving

²⁹⁹ Ibid., 175.

³⁰⁰ BE Works, vol. 1, 417.

³⁰¹ Works, vol. 11, 380.

³⁰² Paul A. Mickey, Essentials of Wesleyan Theology: A Contemporary Affirmation (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1980), 134.

father."³⁰³ The Father aspect adequately overlaps with the Revealer aspect, who intervenes man's life and heart, and bears witness that he is a child of God. God as Revealer plays a great role in Christian experience. It can be said that the Father aspect of God underlies Wesley's understanding of initial sanctification.

Christian Perfection

One of the remarkable topic in Wesley's theology is the synthesis of the doctrine of Christian perfection. He thought of it as "grand depositum" of Methodism.³⁰⁴ Before discussing the correlation of the concept of God with the understanding of Christian perfection, the meaning of sin in Wesley's theology will be identified. For the understanding of sin can make any differences on the understanding of salvation. In particular, it influences on the perception of Christian perfection.³⁰⁵ As Wesley calls it "a voluntary transgression of a know law," his definition of sin is quite clear.³⁰⁶ He holds this definition firmly through all his argument, and "the view of Christian perfection for which he contends can only be understood in its light."³⁰⁷ Actually, this view is consistent with what he mentioned about God's sovereignty. He says,

He will punish no man for doing anything which he could not possibly avoid; neither for omitting anything which he could not possibly do. Every

³⁰³ Lindström, 175.

³⁰⁴ Harper, 91.

³⁰⁵ W. E. Sangster, The Path to Perfection (London: Epworth Press, 1943), 71.

³⁰⁶ Ibid..

³⁰⁷ Ibid..

punishment supposes the offender might have avoided the offence for which he is punished: Otherwise, to punish him would be palpably unjust, and inconsistent with the character of God our Governor.³⁰⁸

In terms of sin concept, the assumption that God is a Governor or a righteous Judge influences his doctrine of Christian perfection, in the sense that as far as man's consciousness is concerned, man can be perfect as a Christian. He takes man's moral responsibility caused by man's consciousness into consideration in defining the meaning of Christian perfection. Accordingly, his argument is that when Christian perfection is analyzed in terms of sin concept, it is not sinless perfection. He states,

He misunderstands and misrepresents my sentiments on the subject. He says, "Mr. Wesley seems to maintain, that sinless perfection is actually attained by every one born of God." (Page 39.) I do not maintain this; I do not believe it. I believe Christian perfection, or perfect love, (sinless perfection is an expression which I do not use or contend for,) is not attained by any of the children of God till they are what the Apostle John terms fathers.³⁰⁹

Then the meaning of perfection will be surveyed. Wesley advocates "Christian perfection." He summarizes his view of Christian perfection in the last part of "A Plain Account of Christian Perfection."

"(4.) It is not absolute. Absolute perfection belongs not to man, nor to angels, but to God alone. "(5.) It does not make a man infallible: None is infallible, while he remains in the body. "(6.) Is it sinless? It is not worth while to contend for a term. It is 'salvation from sin.' "(7.) It is 'perfect love.' (1 John iv. 18.) This is the essence of it; its properties, or inseparable fruits, are, rejoicing evermore, praying without ceasing, and in everything giving thanks. (1 Thess. v. 16, &c.)³¹⁰

³⁰⁸ Works, vol. 10, 363.

³⁰⁹ Ibid., 350.

³¹⁰ Works, vol. 11, 442.

It should be noted that Christian perfection has limits.³¹¹ It is not such an absolute perfection as God alone has. It is not infallibility, nor is angelic perfection.

Two aspects will be pointed out in reflecting on the meaning of Christian perfection which can be attained on earth by believers: purity of intention and perfect love. The first thing is that the aspect of intention is focused. This was Wesley's basic concept through his life. At the beginning of "A Plain Account of Christian Perfection," he states that purity of intention is the crucial issue for him.³¹² God accepts our intention and our motives, "for in the light of his impeccable holiness even our best actions fall short."³¹³ There is no doubt that God is holy. However, what makes Christian perfection possible is the fact that God sees our motives. This can not be explained only by the roles of God as a Creator and a sovereign King. For, if He is only a transcendent Creator and a sovereign King who has an absolutely holy standard to pass a judgment on man, imperfect man cannot stand before Him forever. However, if God sees an intention when man does anything, there is a possibility that man can be perfect even before perfectly holy God. Because man can be perfect about his intention, especially in terms of love, though imperfect man's deeds cannot be perfect before a perfect God. Therefore, it assumes the roles of God as a merciful Priest and a loving Father, even though He has an absolute standard. Wesley's concept of Christian perfection is based on his concept

³¹¹ Harper, 92.

³¹² Works, vol. 11, 366.

³¹³ Harper, 95-96.

of a merciful and loving God.

The second thing is that in Wesley's idea of perfection, the stress falls on love.³¹⁴ Wesley made clear that Christian perfection is the perfection in love.³¹⁵ God sees that when man is perfect in love, he has experienced Christian perfection. It is a "loving God with all our heart."³¹⁶ Since this love comes from God, man can love Him and his neighbors in return. Unless God loves man and pours His love into man, man cannot have love. Once He pours His love into man, man can be perfect in terms of love before God. A love relationship, which is based on God's love shed abroad in man's heart and expressed to each other, is the foundation of Christian perfection.

In considering God's role about Christian perfection, in other words, the God-man relationship, i.e., the father-child relationship based on God's love, is the foundation and the key concept of Christian perfection. Christian perfection cannot be discussed without the role of God as Father. In discussing Christian perfection only with the concept such as righteousness or holiness, and without love which falls into a category of the family concept, Christian perfection is impossible. The fact that God is a loving Father is an inevitable element in Christian perfection. The role of God as Father definitely influences Wesley's concept of Christian perfection.

Summary

³¹⁴ Sangster, 79.

³¹⁵ Martin Schmidt, John Wesley: A Theological Biography, vol. 2, part 2 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1973), 132.

³¹⁶ Sangster, 79.

When the correlation of Wesley's understanding of the roles of God with his concept of soteriology is examined, it is clear that the roles of God as Father, Revealer, and Judge underlie each part of the process. In Wesley, justification is understood as the starting point of a father-child relationship. Faith begins when God accepts the believer into the family of God. The Father concept plays a crucial role in his thought of initial sanctification. Meanwhile, two aspects are important for Christian perfection which can be attained on earth by believers: purity of intention and perfect love. God sees man's intention and when man is perfect in love, he has experienced Christian perfection. In considering love in Christian perfection, the love which falls into a category of a family is a key concept. Thus, the fact that God is a loving Father becomes a crucial element. Without love expressed in family terms, Christian perfection is impossible. The role of God as Father has a major impact on Wesley's concept of Christian perfection. Thus, the concept of love presented as a father-child relationship is the foundation of his order of salvation. Accordingly, his concept of the role of God is an important element to constitute his soteriology.

Pastoral Theology

Background

In order to clarify Wesley's distinctive in his ministry, it is important to compare the ministry and the theological point of view of George Whitefield with Wesley's. Whitefield was a Moderate Calvinist, though he behaved as a High Calvinist in terms of the understanding of the doctrine of predestination at that time. "For Whitefield, God's grace is given to all men to hinder their sinning, but redemptively

only to the elect."³¹⁷ The reason Wesley opposed the Calvinistic views was that he considered them to contain a tendency to antinomianism.³¹⁸ The difference for a time alienated Whitefield, and caused a division in Methodism that was to be permanent.³¹⁹ This alienation was a heartbreaking experience to Wesley, since he confessed thirty years later that "Whitefield 'had a heart susceptible of the most generous and the most tender friendship.'"³²⁰

Not only the concept of predestination, but also the goal of the ministry was different between two. Wesley's ministry was to organize societies and to build preaching houses in England, while Whitefield's ministry was to range through the American colonies to kindle the old churches into new zeal.³²¹ It is possible that the difference in ministry stems from the difference in their doctrine of God. In this study the correlation of the type of ministry with the concept of God is explored, especially by following Wesley's ministries and his theological framework.

Discipleship

To Wesley, the call to be a Christian means a call to grow.³²² He believed that

³¹⁷ Reist, 34.

³¹⁸ A Methodist Preacher, John Wesley the Methodist: A Plain Account of His Life and Work (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1903), 153.

³¹⁹ C. T. Winchester, The Life of John Wesley (New York: Macmillan Company, 1921), 102.

³²⁰ John Pollock, George Whitefield: And the Great Awakening (Belleville: Lion Publishing Corporation, 1972), 176.

³²¹ Methodist Preacher, 153.

³²² Harper, 75.

God gives the experiences and means by which we can grow in grace. This feature in his ministry was to nurture people in their faith. Though he stressed justification by faith, which is apart from all works of laws, it "did not lead him in the direction of antinomianism."³²³ Wesley believed that "once the new life in Christ had been kindled in the experience of regeneration, it required to be nurtured by a strong regulative system."³²⁴ While he traveled far and wide as an evangelist to win people to Christ, he tried to make disciples as well.³²⁵ He organized the Methodist society and the class system to assist in this effort. People asked Wesley to watch over their spiritual life because by accepting the message of justification by faith they placed themselves in very sharp contrast to their circumstances. Wesley responded to this.³²⁶ Though many small groups were formed, they were not emotional revival services, nor informal group-fellowships.³²⁷

The only condition to enter this society was "'a desire to flee from the wrath to come, to be saved from their sins.'"³²⁸ They voluntarily participated in the Methodist society. Their desires to enter the Methodist society had to be tested. He

³²³ A. Skevington Wood, The Burning Heart: John Wesley - Evangelist (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1987), 187.

³²⁴ Ibid..

³²⁵ Ibid., 75.

³²⁶ Martin Schmidt, John Wesley: A Theological Biography, vol. 2, part 1 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972), 96.

³²⁷ Wood, 187.

³²⁸ Works, vol. 8, 250.

states in "The Nature, Design, and General Rules of the United Societies,"

It is therefore expected of all who continue therein, that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation, First, by doing no harm, by avoiding evil in every kind; especially that which is most generally practised: [...] Secondly, by doing good, by being, in every kind, merciful after their power; as they have opportunity, doing good of every possible sort, and as far as is possible, to all men; [...] Thirdly, by attending upon all the ordinances of God.³²⁹

Wesley instituted the rules of Methodist society, and checked the members so that they might observe the regulations.

However, what should be noted here is that, although he kept these strict rules in society, the underlying principles of the society were the concepts "togetherness" and "love." He defines it in "The Nature, Design, and General Rules of the United Societies."

Such a societies is no other than "a company of men having the form and seeking the power of godliness, united in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they may help each other to work out their salvation."³³⁰

The principle "together" was kept among the members of societies, just like in the Early Church.³³¹ From the perspective of pastoral care, Wesley "put the emphasis upon joint responsibility."³³² Wesley's understanding of Christianity as a relationship is very significant. He thought that Christian growth took place when the principle security and love in a relationship which was provided by the Holy Spirit

³²⁹ Ibid., 270-271.

³³⁰ Ibid., 269.

³³¹ Fujimoto, 60.

³³² John Wesley: A Theological Biography, vol. 2, part 1, 98.

were observed.³³³

It is assumed that this concept comes from Wesley's understanding of God and salvation. He saw God "in terms of a loving father who sustained a relationship with His children after the analogy of a family."³³⁴ Therefore, the strict regulations in Methodist societies should not be interpreted as just the rules for Christians to follow in order to keep a standard for their lives. If it is based on the family concept, the regulations of the society have an educational aim which is provided by a father in a family. Because of love, a father educates his children according to a certain standard based on his concept of good and evil. The concept of Christian growth and discipleship given shape in the groups called societies or bands comes from this family context. Unless God is a loving Father, the concept of discipleship would lose its theological foundation. That God is a loving Father is the crucial element for him to make the nurturing system of the Methodist groups. The concept of "joint responsibility" in Methodist movement also suggests that the underlying perception was family atmosphere.

This is also the main difference between the Reformers and Wesley, since The Reformers laid stress on the character of God as Creator and Judge, who establishes a legal relationship with man through justification by faith. Therefore, the important concept is to be justified legally. The legal courtroom is one of the chief perceptual frameworks of the Reformers. Meanwhile, the Wesleyan distinctive is on a family

³³³ Harper, 76.

³³⁴ Burgess, 34.

concept, with a conversion experience regarded as a new birth, which is the spiritual beginning of father-child relationship. It is said that "the atmosphere of the Wesley societies was much warmer than the atmosphere of Luther's or Calvin's churches."³³⁵ A similar contrast can be seen in the difference between Wesley and Whitefield. The difference in the understanding of the doctrine of God and the concept of salvation derived from the concept of God is the watershed between Wesleyanism and Calvinism.

Summary

As Wesley believed that God gives the experiences and means by which we can grow in grace, one feature of his ministry was to nurture people in their faith. This concept was given shape in small groups in Methodist movement. The key concept of these groups is "family atmosphere" and "love," which is given from above. The societies and the bands are the places of education of spiritual children by a loving God. Christian growth which is the purpose of his ministry takes place in the principle of security and love in a relationship. The important thing is that this concept comes from Wesley's understanding of the role of God. Wesley's God is a loving Father who sustains a relationship with His children after the analogy of a family. After new birth, He raises His children and educates them spiritually in love. Considering the difference between the concept of ministry of Wesley and that of Whitefield, and the concept of the roles of God of Wesley and that of Calvinists, Wesley's understanding of the roles of God influences his pastoral theology. A

³³⁵ Ibid., 35.

Father's love is the key concept underlying his ministry.

CHAPTER 4

Conclusion

The roles of God are described as a Creator and as a Governor in Wesley's direct summary of the roles of God, "Thoughts upon God's Sovereignty." Though Wesley just used the expression, "a Creator and a Governor," the immanence aspect rather than the transcendence aspect is stressed in his concept of God. An important thing is that the concept of the two-fold character of God is derived from the theological background, for a Governor aspect needed to be emphasized in order to identify the distinction of his concept from a Calvinistic view of predestination.

As a matter of fact, it is evident by examining the statements related to the roles of God in his sermons that Wesley's concept of God has other aspects than a Creator and a Governor. Wesley's concept of God cannot be described only as a contrast, but also as a well-balanced and sophisticated one. The analysis indicates that Wesley's God has mainly five facets: Revealer, Father, King, Judge, and Creator. These five facets are different from each other in terms of the roles of God, yet they are overlapped in some degree. The goal in Wesley's thought is the recovery of image of God based on God's holiness, and the underlying concept is the love based on God's holiness. Especially, the concept of love influences every other aspect such as God's sovereignty, righteousness, truth, power, purity, goodness, etc.. Accordingly, His love underlies the other roles of God such as a Redeemer and a Shepherd as well, though there are few direct statements about them in his sermons.

Two balances in Wesley's concept become the keys in understanding Wesley's

doctrine of God. The first one is the balance of the transcendence and immanence of God. Wesley's concept is neither deistic nor pantheistic but a warm, well-balanced theism. The second one is the balance of love and law which originates in God's attributes. Both of God's redeeming love and His disciplining law are necessary and available through God's redemptive works.

In thinking of Wesleyanism, it can be said Wesleyan theologians' perspectives are generally in line with Wesley's concept of God. The moral attributes of God are discussed, harmony and balance are valued, and love is the key concept through all other attributes. Accordingly, Wesleyanism today is derived from Wesley's concept of God, and conversely, Wesley's concept of God can be regarded as "Wesleyanism." The element which becomes the watershed with Calvinistic views can be especially found in the two roles of God as Revealer and as Father. In the Wesleyan theological framework, this is discussed in terms of God's attributes: holiness and love.

This Wesleyan distinctive influences other aspects of theology. In particular, the Father and Revealer aspects of God and the concept of love are underlying the theological implications in the Wesleyanism. Wesley, who criticized the High Calvinism at that time, introduced his distinctive concept of God into the argumentation of predestination with Calvinists. In particular, Wesley's distinctiveness of the concept of God is shown in God's sovereignty, God's eternal decree, and God's election. Wesley believed that the concept of predestination should be based on God's attributes, especially on His love and His justice. Wesley's concept of God influenced his understanding of the Calvinistic views and the debate with the Calvinists at that

time.

In Wesley's soteriology, the roles of God as Father, Revealer, and Judge are underlying the process consistently. In Wesley, justification is understood as the starting point of a father-child relationship. Meanwhile, two aspect are important for Christian perfection: purity of intention and perfect love. This makes Christian perfection possible. In considering love in Christian perfection, the love which falls into a category of a family concept is a key idea. Thus, the role of God as Father influences Wesley's concept of salvation and Christian perfection definitely.

One feature in Wesley's ministry was to nurture people in their faith, which was given shape in small groups in the Methodist movement. The key concept of these groups is "family atmosphere" and God's "love." This concept comes from Wesley's understanding of the role of God, a loving Father who sustains a relationship with His children after the analogy of a family. Also the security and love in a relationship are provided by the Holy Spirit, who is Revealer. Considering the difference between the concept of ministry of Wesley and that of Whitefield, Wesley's understanding of the roles of God influences his pastoral theology. A Father's love is the key concept underlying his ministry.

From this study, it is clear that some very significant theological implications derive from an understanding of the roles of God. The crucial element which divides Wesleyanism and Calvinism can be found in their understanding of the roles of God. When the balance of the roles of God is lost, the distinctive of the Wesleyanism disappears, and the tendency toward Calvinistic views emerges. In order to get the

key to solve the argument between Calvinism and Wesleyanism, the doctrine of God which is the foundation of theological implications has to be examined carefully. The argument between the Calvinists and the Wesleyans has been long lasting. It is not likely that the argument will come to an end only by examining the concept of predestination, the understanding of salvation, and the perception of ministry. However, if the starting point of each theological point of view will be inspected carefully, in other words, if a misconception is found about the doctrine of God, especially the attributes and roles of God, in either Calvinism or Wesleyanism, this can be the key to understand the controversy between them.

Since this study is limited in the sense that the main materials were Wesley's sermons, the further research will be needed in order to get a more accurate understanding of the doctrine of God in Wesleyanism.

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